

# THY CROSS MY STAY

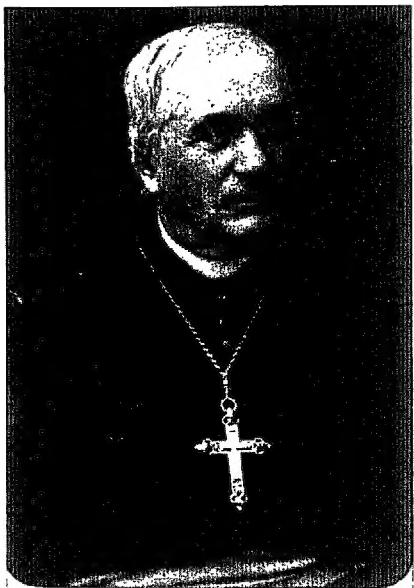
By

LÉON HERMANT, O.M.I.





**THY CROSS MY STAY**



L. Vital P. D. St. Albans

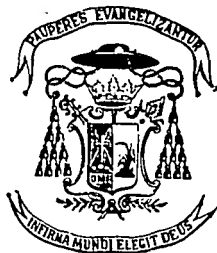
*Bishop Grandia, about 1889*

# THY CROSS MY STAY

THE LIFE OF THE  
SERVANT OF GOD

VITAL JUSTIN GRANDIN

*Oblate of Mary Immaculate  
and First Bishop  
of St. Albert  
Canada*



LEON HERMANT, O.M.I.

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THE SERVANT OF GOD, VITAL JUSTIN GRANDIN  
*Oblate of Mary Immaculate, First Bishop of St. Albert*

## DEDICATION

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TO HIS EMINENCE  
J. M. RODRIGUE, CARDINAL VILLENEUVE, O.M.I.

ARCHBISHOP OF QUEBEC, PRIMATE OF CANADA

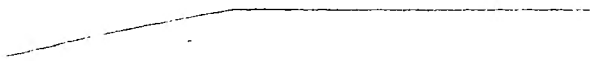
AND

TO HIS EXCELLENCY  
MSGR. GABRIEL BREYNAT, O.M.I.

FORMER VICAR APOSTOLIC OF THE MACKENZIE  
WHO HAS SO ADMIRABLY CARRIED ON  
BISHOP GRANDIN'S WORK IN THE FAR NORTH

I RESPECTFULLY DEDICATE  
THESE PAGES

*Léon Hermant, O.M.I.*





## PREFACE

Bishop Grandin! What a picture of meekness and of humility that name evokes!

Two mottoes shed their light on his laborious and fruitful career: that of the Oblates: "He hath sent me to preach the Gospel to the poor", and that which he chose as Bishop: "The weak things of the world hath God chosen."

In this biography the author has wisely chosen to let his hero tell us in his own words a great deal about his apostolic life. The simplicity of this great soul is mirrored in his style, and yet what shrewdness in this simplicity! It was after completing a heroic journey of eight months in what has been called the "fearful North" that this saintly missionary wrote with child-like simplicity:

"Many a time, ready to drop with fatigue and almost discouraged, I have caught myself saying: 'I can go no farther; I can do no more!' And then I have found that, even when one thinks another step is impossible, one can still do a great deal."

Interest grips us from the very beginning of this book and increases as page follows page so that, the last chapter finished, we find ourselves longing to know more of this great Apostle. In other words, the success of this book is assured. May it find its way into every Catholic College and Institution and into every Catholic family. There is a saying that we are led by example. I am sure that the example set by this humble

yet heroic-Apostle will draw countless vocations to our Missions and will lead many to help our missionaries in their financial needs.

The reading of this book will inspire us confidently to ask for favours and even miracles through the intercession of Bishop Grândin, and these favours and miracles will hasten the day on which this humble and holy Bishop will be ranked among the Beatified.

I know that the author of this biography desires no other reward here below.

✠ Gabriel Breynat, O.M.I.,

Bishop of Adramyte,  
Vicar Apostolic of the Mackenzie

## CONTENTS

Dedication.....	V
Preface.....	VII
Contents.....	IX
List of Illustrations.....	XI
Letter of acknowledgment from Cardinal Villeneuve.....	XIII
Why then, they asked, what will this boy grow to be? And indeed the hand of the Lord was with him.....	1
I am Thy servant and the son of Thy handmaid....	5
This is the man I have chosen to be the instrument for bringing My name before the heathen.....	10
Be shepherds to the flock God has given you. Carry out your charge as God would have it done, cordially not as drudges; generous, ... not tyrannizing... But setting an example, as the best you may, to the whole flock.....	15
Three times it made me entreat the Lord to rid me of it, but He told me, My grace is enough for thee; My grace finds full scope in thy weakness	20
The grace of the Lord came upon me in a full tide of faith and love, the love that is in Christ Jesus	27
With us Christ's love is a compelling force.....	33
Brethren, you can remember how we toiled and laboured all the time we were preaching God's Gospel to you.....	46
I have toiled harder... So often looked death in the face... I have spent a night and a day as a castaway at sea.....	55

The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away... Blessed is the name of the Lord.....	65
We desired nothing better than to offer you our own lives... It is within your knowledge that we treated everyone of you as a father treats his children, encouraging you, comforting you....	74
I will gladly spend and be spent on your souls' behalf.....	88
In faith, in patience, in love, in endurance.....	97
What journeys I have undertaken!... I have met toil and weariness... All this over and above something else which I do not count — I mean the burden I carry every day, my anxious care for all the churches.....	107
The insults, the hardships, the persecutions, the times of difficulty I undergo for Christ.....	117
We have never asked for human praise.....	124
A voice was heard on high of lamentation and mourning, of Rachel weeping for her children..	130
And He that gives this warning says, indeed I am coming soon. Be it so, then; come, Lord Jesus!..	136
The time has nearly come when I can go free!....	143
He meantime was praying: Lord Jesus, he said, receive my spirit!.....	149
Well, done, good and faithful servant!.....	156

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Bishop Grandin, about 1880.....	II
Bishop Grandin shortly after his consecration. He was then 30 years old.....	21
Bishop Charles Eugene de Mazenod, Bishop of Marseilles. Founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.....	28
Mother Mann, Provincial Superior, with the group of Sisters who opened a foundation at Portage La Loche in 1943.....	34
Ascending the rapids on English River. Bishop Grandin passed here several times.....	39
Log cabin at Beaver Lake. Father W. Comiré, O.M.I. and Brother Barassé, O.M.I.....	66
First log Cathedral at St. Albert, built in 1862.....	78
Cree chief Sweet Grass.....	81
Monument to Father Lacombe, O.M.I., at St. Albert.....	83
Bishop Grandin's Residence.....	89
Second Cathedral at St. Albert in 1875. }	
Convent of the Grey Nuns..... }	
First Convent of the Grey Nuns at St. Albert, built in 1863.....	91
First Catholic Church in Edmonton, built in 1857.....	102
First School of the Grey Nuns in St. Albert. Later it became a part of the Junior Seminary .....	106
Father Edward Cunningham, O.M.I., first native Albertan priest.....	110

## XII LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The second Residence of Bishop Grandin, which became the Convent of the Grey Nuns in 1886.....	114
Father Patrick Beaudry, O.M.I., second native Albertan priest.....	126
Third and present Convent of Grey Nuns at St. Albert.....	134
Bishops at the Consecration of Bishop Breynat, O.M.I., April 6th, 1902, at St. Albert.....	140
Third Cathedral and Present Church at St. Albert.....	145
Bishop Grandin in his later years.....	150
Tombs of Bishop Grandin, Father Lacombe, Father Leduc .....	158

Archbishop's Residence, Quebec,  
November 12th, 1937

*Reverend and Dear Father:*

You have added another book to your series of books concerning our beloved Congregation. Having described the fields of our missionary labours, you now undertake to portray our missionary Saints. A short time ago, you painted the picture of Our Venerated Founder, that Bishop afire with zeal for God's glory, and now you offer us the portrait of one of his most illustrious sons, Vital Justin Grandin, the first Bishop of St. Albert, and the heroic Apostle of those poor Indians of Western Canada.

Because I happen to be an Oblate Cardinal and a Canadian Archbishop, you have graciously dedicated this book to me. I am deeply touched by this, particularly as it recalls to my mind words once addressed to me: "If you wear the crimson robes of a Cardinal, it is to honour the blood shed by your fellow Oblate Missionaries."

May the Immaculate Virgin Mary bless your undertakings.

Fraternally yours in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate,

J. M. Rodrigue, Cardinal Villeneuve, O.M.I.,  
Archbishop of Québec



7. 11. 1920.



# THY CROSS MY STAY

## CHAPTER ONE

WHY THEN, THEY ASKED, WHAT WILL THIS BOY GROW TO BE?  
AND INDEED THE HAND OF THE LORD WAS WITH HIM.

—Luke I, 66

Consecrated to the Blessed Virgin Mary before his birth, Vital Justin Grandin, the ninth child of a family of fourteen, was born at St. Pierre-la-Cour, France, February 8th, 1829, and was baptized on the same day.

Some time before Vital's birth, an exceptionally violent cyclone had ruined his father's farm and M. Grandin, with all the money he had, had bought an inn. But times were hard and the venture failed. However, the young family had to be fed and clothed, and so, when Vital was about two years old, the family moved to a small farm near the village of Aron.

Exquisitely sensitive and tenderly affectionate by nature, Vital grew up in sentiments of deep love for God and for his relatives. His greatest delight at this time was to serve Mass. On account of his piety he was, by a privilege then rarely granted, allowed to receive his first Communion before he was ten years of age. It was with angelic fervour that he received his God into his soul, and, from that moment, he yearned to be a Priest. To the end of his long life, he celebrated the anniversary of his First Communion.

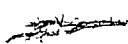
Still, he dared not speak to his parents of his desire to be a Priest. They were so poor, there were so many mouths to feed, and his brother Jean, eight years older than himself, was already in the Seminary.

Although he had to remain at home, Vital was really at school—at a school where he learned many a priceless

lesson. When his brother Jean had spoken of his desire to be a Priest, his father had answered: "I do not think that you are worthy. To be a Priest, one must give up all desire for comfort; one must be a Saint."—"But, father," replied the boy, "it is not for comfort or for ease that I wish to be a Priest; I wish to be a Priest for the greater glory of God and in order to sacrifice myself for the salvation of souls."—"In that case, dear child," replied the father, "I have no objection. Go to the Seminary and we will do our utmost to pay your way."

Shortly after this, three of the older children found work in Paris and were able to send a little money home. Then a fairly well-to-do uncle employed Vital to herd his sheep. The young shepherd's piety grew as he spent his leisure reading and thinking about the Saints and saying the Rosary. He stayed with his uncle until he was about thirteen and then returned to his parents. He had not as yet mentioned his desire to be a Priest. "I dared not speak of this to them," he wrote, "as my going to the Seminary would impose too heavy a financial burden on the family. Thinking that it would cost nothing to be a Brother, and believing that a Brother was a sort of lesser Priest, my resolution was soon taken: I would join the Brothers! Jean took me to the Brothers of St. Joseph in Le Mans and I was admitted. After I had spent two months there, they sent me home on account of my poor health."

Greatly disappointed though he was, Vital humbly submitted to God's will and returned to his former work. But the call of God sounded louder and louder in his soul and, feeling himself unable to follow his vocation, he was sick at heart. He wrote: "Noticing how I suffered and immediately suspecting the reason, my mother asked me what I wished to be. I told her that I desired to be a Priest, but that I had never dared mention this on account of our poverty. 'We are poor,' she replied, 'but God will help us. When your brother Jean entered the Seminary, we did not know how we could pay for his education and now he has almost



finished his studies. Go to Father Garnier and ask him to teach you Latin'."

Father Garnier began to teach Vital Latin but was, unfortunately as it seemed, soon transferred to another parish. However, the boy's brother Jean, then a Seminarian at Le Mans, came to the rescue. With the help of a relative, Sister Anne-Marie, a Carmelite, he found a charitable person, living near the Seminary, who agreed to give Vital board and lodging for forty francs a year. During his recreations and holidays, Jean spent his time teaching his younger brother Latin. Sister Anne-Marie not only taught him French but succeeded in interesting Sister Françoise, a religious of Perpetual Adoration, in the young student. These two Sisters managed to supply Vital with clothes and they remained his benefactresses throughout life.—"I used to call the one my aunt and the other my grandmother," wrote Vital. "They were certainly that and more than that to me."

Sister Françoise spoke of Vital to the Abbé Sébaux, the private secretary of Bishop Bouvier, and she spoke so highly of him that, after seeing Vital, this kindly Priest made him his Mass server and gave him several hours of class every week. Vital made rapid progress and he and his teacher became—and remained for life—steadfast friends. Both were destined to be Bishops.

Fearing that his pupil's lisp might prevent him from being ordained, the Abbé Sébaux took him to see the Bishop in order to get the latter's opinion. After looking at the boy for a few moments, the Bishop said: "Do you love God, Vital? Do you sometimes think of Him?" "Sometimes," replied Vital, with delightful ingenuousness, "I do not."—"Do you wish to be a Priest of Jesus Christ?" asked the Bishop.—"My Lord," replied the boy, "that is the one and only thing I want and pray for."—"Good," said the Bishop, "be a good Priest and your lisp will not bother you at all." This fatherly reply filled the child's heart with joy and gave him courage. In the sequel of our story, we shall see that

this very impediment actually helped in carrying out the designs of God on His faithful servant.

One would have to realize the depth of Vital's love for his mother to understand what a blow it was to him when, at about this time, she died. More than forty years later, his eyes moist with tears, he wrote: "For some time my dear mother had been seriously ill. I had been told that she could not recover but I could not bring myself to believe that she would die. Jean used to receive several letters from home every week, but he communicated only parts of these letters to me. On the 6th of December I rapped at his door and entered his room. His back was towards me and, without turning around, he said: 'I am very busy; I will see you later.' I did not suspect that he was weeping. That evening, my cousin, Sister Anne-Marie, broke the news to me. God alone knows what I suffered.—My brother found me in a pitiful state."—He adds, "My studies may have been incomplete; my sufferings certainly were not."

Vital, now sixteen, was admitted to the Minor Seminary at Précigné thanks to the kind offices of Father Sébaux. He was not long in the Seminary before the Superior discerned his exceptional qualities and also his poor health. He was permitted to spend the study periods in the garden. His fellow students were very kind to him. "We were," he wrote, "just one big family."

It was at about this time that he wrote to one of his younger sisters who had complained to him of something or other: "No matter what happens, let us sincerely say from the bottom of our hearts: 'Lord, Thy will be done', and let us not add: 'and mine also'." Time after time he had put into practice this advice as painful illness stretched him on a bed of suffering.

Great was his joy, a year later, when he served at his brother Jean's first Mass. But the day on which he would say his first Mass seemed far, far away. His health appeared shattered. For many days (and how

frequently!) he found himself confined to the infirmary. On several occasions he had to give up his studies and leave the Seminary on account of ill health. It was for this reason that he spent more than two years at the Priest's house in St. Loup-du-Gast where his brother was curate,—and also his teacher. Of Vital, the Superior at the Seminary wrote: "Vital Grandin has proved himself to be an exemplary student, ever faithful to duty, everywhere in the lead both in personal application and in good example. It is not surprising that he is esteemed and loved both by the masters and the pupils of the institution."

On account of his illness he was twenty-one before he finished his classical course. It was then that, ill and suffering, he said timidly to his friend, Father Sébaux: "I would like to be a missionary in foreign lands."

## CHAPTER TWO

I AM THY SERVANT AND THE SON OF THY HANDMAID

—Psalm 115, 16

Vital had long yearned to go to the foreign Missions where but recently so many of his countrymen had suffered martyrdom, but he had kept his desire to himself because he deemed himself unworthy of so great a calling. "I really believed that to be worthy of going to the foreign Missions, one should have the gift of miracles."

He finally mustered enough courage to make known his desire. Now, he thought, all would be fair sailing. Had he not successfully passed the examinations set for those who wished to enter the Grand Seminary? Since he had passed these examinations, why should the Seminary of the Foreign Missions refuse him admission? As usual, it was to the Abbé Sébaux that he went for advice. Without hesitating, his friend said: "Yes, my dear young man, I believe that you will be able to

go to the foreign Missions. Moreover, I believe that you will be able to go as a member of one of our Religious Congregations. Your health is not very good, but, as St. Paul puts it 'The weak things of this life hath God chosen!' Go to the Seminary and, during your course in philosophy, think it over: The main thing for you to do at present is to strive to regain your health."

Greatly encouraged, Vital entered the Major Seminary at Le Mans in October, 1850. Sisters Anne-Marie and Françoise had prepared a trousseau for him. A rather interesting detail is that Sister Françoise had been given one of Bishop Bouvier's cassocks and that she had dyed it black for Vital.

The Abbé Sébaux had undertaken to pay for Vital's board and lodging at the Seminary and had arranged with the Superior to have the young man treated as a convalescent in so far as food, room, and heating were concerned. Thanks to this thoughtfulness, Vital's health was sufficiently good to enable him to spend the entire year at his studies. It was during this year that he finally obtained his father's permission to become a missionary.

His father was deeply touched by one of his son's arguments: "If God be everywhere," wrote Vital, "are we not bound to do our utmost to make Him known and loved everywhere?"

Vital had never heard of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate but he had heard of the Society of Jesus. While many things attracted him to this great Order, he feared to join it because he knew that, as a member, he might have to become a professor instead of becoming a missionary.

On the 21st of September, 1851, he entered the famous Seminary of the Foreign Missions in Paris. To leave his family was a heart-breaking ordeal for him. Later, he wrote: "Of all my trials and sufferings none can be compared with that of leaving home. God was certainly good to me when He took my mother before the time came for me to take this step."

He had hardly reached the Seminary when he thanked his father for having courageously let him leave home. He asked his father to pray that he, his son, become a Saint.

He had not dared bid his sister Mélanie goodbye, "in order," as he wrote, "to spare your feelings and mine. Our parting would have been too painful." The one who suffered the most was the Abbé Jean Grandin who, having for years longed to go to the foreign Missions, now saw that, with Vital going, he would have to remain in France. He was, however, to do a great deal for the foreign Missions by indefatigably assisting his brother both spiritually and materially for almost fifty years.

Everything at the Seminary delighted Vital. He looked with admiration upon the older students among whom were the future Martyrs, the Blessed Théophane Vénard and Chapdelaine, whose Mass he frequently had the privilege of serving. He loved the "Martyrs' Chapel" and longingly gazed on objects which had belonged to the Martyrs as well as on the instruments of torture by means of which they had won their crowns. He was thrilled at the beautiful ceremony which took place each time new missionaries went forth to labour and to die for Christ. He longed for the day when his turn should come and, as he was making rapid progress in his studies, the day seemed not far distant. Then, in a letter from his friend and benefactor, the Abbé Sébaux, there came another blow. "The directors of the Seminary have informed me," ran the letter, "that, while they hold you in high esteem, they are convinced that your defect of speech will make it impossible for you to speak an Oriental language and, therefore, in time of persecution, to disguise yourself. Do not be discouraged. This is simply God's way of telling you that your place is among the diocesan clergy at home, — unless, of course, you wish to try to enter another Seminary for Foreign Missions."

Vital, heart-broken, went to see the Superior. "He

was as deeply afflicted as I was," wrote the young Seminarian, "and his grief served only to add to mine. I happened to mention to him that one of my classmates had entered the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The Superior advised me to seek admission to this Congregation. He invited me to remain at the Seminary until I had received a reply from the Oblate Fathers and had taken my decision."

Fully determined to be a missionary in foreign lands, Vital immediately wrote to the Master of Novices and asked to be admitted to the Oblate Congregation. Hearing of what his brother had done, the Abbé Jean wrote: "It is I and not you who should go to the foreign Missions. Stay at home and I will take your place."

On the 15th of December, Vital received a favourable reply from the Master of Novices and, filled with joy at the prospect of becoming a missionary of his beloved Immaculate Mother, he immediately set out for the Oblate Novitiate at which he arrived on December 21st. The Master of Novices, who admitted him, was, shortly afterwards, changed and his place was taken by a Belgian Oblate, Father Vanderberghe, "whose sureness of judgment and kindness of heart were enhanced by a high degree of virtue."

Vital took the religious habit, December 28th, but, from the outset, feared that he would be sent home. Such an idea, however, was far from the minds of his Superiors, who very quickly noted his angelic piety and his full-hearted devotedness and who were pleased to see that his health improved.

The letters which he wrote home were full of deep affection:—again and again he thanked his father and brothers for allowing him to become a missionary and to his sisters he preached resignation to God's Holy Will. One of his brothers had strenuously opposed Vital's decision to go to the foreign Missions but, after receiving several letters from Vital, he changed his views so completely that, years later, he gladly let one of his



own sons join Vital who was then a Bishop in Western Canada.

The life and usages of the Novitiates fitted in perfectly with the young Novice's aspirations, — prayer, meditation, recitation of the Divine Office in choir, mutual edification, manual labour, etc., all performed in a spirit of faith and in the presence of God. As for the manual labour, it was nothing new to him. At home, had he not washed the dishes, swept the house, peeled the vegetables, and worked in the garden?

The first sermon which (according to the custom of the Novitiate) he delivered during his year of probation was on the Propagation of the Faith. Naturally, he was very nervous on account of his defect of speech. We may judge of his joy when, in commenting upon the sermon, the Superior said: "My dear Brother, you need not fear. Your slight lisp will not bother you either in France or in America."

The outstanding event of the year at the Novitiate was the visit of a young Canadian Oblate, Bishop Taché, who had recently been consecrated by Bishop de Mazenod, Founder of the Oblates. Bishop Taché had been appointed by the Holy See as Coadjutor to Bishop Provencher, first Bishop of the diocese of St. Boniface, which then included more than what is now Western and North-Western Canada. The young Bishop was accompanied by Fathers Rémas and Végreville who were to go to the Western Missions with him. Learning that Brother Grandin was from the same diocese as his two recruits, Bishop Taché invited him to join them at St. Boniface after he had been ordained. The young Novice replied that nothing would please him more. To his relatives he wrote: "I assure you that if I am permitted to go to those Missions, I will never regret the prospects of martyrdom in China or Tonkin."

The time for him to take vows was fast approaching. On December 15th he wrote to his brother Jean: "January 1st will likely be the day on which I am to give myself entirely to God. You cannot realize my joy. In

a few days I shall be an Oblate of our dear Immaculate Mother. Oh, that God would grant that I should be the first Oblate Martyr!"

He took perpetual vows on January 1st, 1853, and soon left the Novitiate for the Scholasticate at Marseilles, where, close to the Founder of their Congregation, the Oblate students pursued their philosophical and theological studies prior to their ordination to the Priesthood.

### CHAPTER THREE

THIS IS THE MAN I HAVE CHOSEN TO BE THE INSTRUMENT FOR  
BRINGING MY NAME BEFORE THE HEATHEN.

—Acts IX. 15

As Brother Grandin had completed the greater part of his studies, he was not to wait long at the Scholasticate for the Priesthood and for the foreign Missions. He had been fervent while a novice. As a student in theology his fervour increased and, so, he made rapid progress, not only in his studies but also in virtue. An apt student, he was also a hard worker and one gifted with rare common sense. While he gave himself wholeheartedly to his studies, he strove ever harder to acquire religious perfection not only for his own good but also for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He often meditated on (and seemed to take for motto) the words of St. Paul: "O Man of God, pursue justice, godliness, faith, charity, patience, mildness. Fight the good fight of faith." We need not add that he was not only highly esteemed but also really loved by all.

Within fourteen months, he received at the hands of Bishop de Mazenod, the tonsure, Minor Orders, the Subdiaconate and the Diaconate. It was decided that, on account of the maturity of his mind and of his holiness and apostolic zeal, he should not be kept waiting for the Priesthood. He was told to prepare immediately for ordination and for the foreign Missions of North

America. His dreams had come true even sooner than he had dared hope. He wrote home immediately: "The day after tomorrow, I am going into retreat. Can you guess why? Because, I, your poor unworthy Vital, am about to receive the greatest honour which God can confer upon a man. I am filled with fear and with joy; with fear, because I am so unworthy; with joy, because I know that God loves the weak and lowly."

He was ordained, April 23rd, by Bishop de Mazenod and, on the morrow, assisted by Father Fabre, then Superior of the Seminary and later Superior-General, he celebrated his first Mass.

He then prepared to leave for America. Knowing how painful it would be to say good-bye to his relatives at home, he decided that it might be better to leave France without seeing them. Hearing of this, his brother Jean protested to Bishop de Mazenod. The latter, believing that Father Grandin had been led to this decision by his spirit of mortification, immediately wrote to the Superior of the Scholastics: "I do not approve of that kind of mortification which mortifies others. You will tell Father Grandin to visit his relatives."

At home the young Priest was overwhelmed with affection. At a gathering of Priests his father declared: "I dearly love both my sons whom God has made Priests. I would rather see both of them ordained Priests and sent to the hardest Missions in the world rather than have them remain in France and receive the highest honours which the Government could bestow upon them."

The Abbé Jean Grandin was still curate at St. Loup-du-Gast. It was in this parish that Father Vital Grandin sang his first High Mass. It was a day of joy for the whole parish and particularly for the venerable Parish Priest (the Abbé Blanchard) who, some years previous, had been so tenderly cared for, during his illness, by Vital. At the close of the imposing ceremony, Mr. de Loze, a member of the French Parliament, said: "This young Priest will make his mark in the world. It would not in the least surprise me if, say in six or seven

years, he should return a Bishop." The Abbé Sébaux was radiant with joy. Only he and the young Priest knew how much he had done to bring Vital to the Altar.

The happy days fled fast and the painful parting quickly approached. The young Missionary begged his father's blessing, embraced his brothers and sisters and, accompanied by the Abbé Jean, left for Le Havre. In his first letter from America, he said to the Abbé Jean: "When the time came for me to leave, you were wonderful! You made my departure less sorrowful to our poor father and to the family, and you consoled them. It was you who encouraged me, congratulated me and so touchingly sang the beautiful "Hymn of Farewell". Wherever I went, you were with me. You were a real brother, a real father to me. And, though I knew your heart was bleeding, for my sake you pretended to be happy and overjoyed and even gay. Together we knelt before the statue of Our Blessed Mother and prayed for that strength which both of us so greatly needed. I can never forget your affection, your thoughtfulness, as you took me aboard at Le Havre. I remember how you wept when I was ill; you took me away from the crowd aboard ship and into a church. In that church, you took me to the small chapel dedicated to Our Blessed Mother and there, on your knees, you begged my blessing. And then you blessed me and we embraced each other.

"The boat's bell rang and we had to hurry. How hard it was for you to tear yourself from me! I remained on the deck and my straining eyes riveted themselves on you until they could see you no longer. And then, unable to bear up longer, I fled to my cabin and wept to my heart's content.

"And our poor dear brother, Frédéric! Do you remember when we went to say good-bye to him? So overwhelmed was he with grief that he was under the impression that both of us were leaving for America, and so he said: 'My dear brothers, since God calls you,

go! You have become Priests not to look after the interests of our family but to look after those of God. You have to work for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls. As for our dear father, do not worry! I will look after him. Fear not and follow God's call! The only thing I ask of you is that you pray for me and my wife and our children. I fear that, with all the work I have to do, I do not think of Him enough.'

"Recalling all these and other things is a source of great consolation to me."

He wrote these touching lines, June 28th, 1854, immediately after reaching Canada. Like the other members of the Congregation in America, he wished to spend himself and die for the Kingdom of God in this new land. He soon met some of these Oblate missionaries and this is what he says of them: "I have found, here in Canada, true brothers and fathers. They have been exceptionally kind to me and have tried, as they still try, to heal the cruel wounds in my poor heart."

Father Grandin had reached Canada but he was still far from the mission fields to which he was destined. He had to leave the civilized parts of Canada, where a certain number of Oblates were working, and to strike out across the continent to the newly-founded Missions of the West. To reach these, he had to cross rivers, lakes, forests, swamps and prairies with the most primitive means of transportation, in all sorts of weather, at the mercy of the unexpected in so far as food, lodging, trustworthiness of guides, the docility of the beasts of burden, and many other things were concerned. In the pages that follow we shall have many an interesting journey to describe.

He reached St. Boniface on the Feast of All Souls, 1854. Bishop Taché cordially welcomed him and, no doubt, reminded him of what he, the Bishop, had said to him years before: "When you are ordained, you shall come to my Missions."

At that time, the nascent village of St. Boniface was very small; consisting, as it did, of the Cathedral, the

Bishop's residence, a convent and a few dwellings scattered along the left bank of the Red River. Across the river, directly opposite the Mission, were two or three buildings which made up Fort Garry, then a Hudson Bay Trading Post and now the thriving metropolis of Winnipeg. At the time of which we write there was no city there. There were the tents of the Indians who filled the nights with their blood-curdling war-whoops. This place, in fact, had been the scene of many a battle between the Sioux and the Santeux and these battles had been so sanguinary that, frequently reddened with human blood, the river had been named the Red River.

Father Grandin spent several months at St. Boniface studying the Indian languages which he would need in his work, learning all that he could from the missionaries, and rendering whatever services were required of him. He then left for the far-distant Nativity Mission which was about seventeen or eighteen hundred miles from St. Boniface. "Although Father Grandin has been here only a short time," wrote Bishop Taché, "he has won all hearts."

He had begun his apostolic career. Humble and simple at all times, ever forgetful of self, and always making himself all things to all men so as to gain all to Christ, this new Francis Xavier was to do immense good by his untiring efforts and by the example he always gave. His journeyings on land and on water, in canoe, on snow-shoes, by dog-train, by boat were to take him a distance equivalent to eight or nine times the distance around the world. And all this was to be done, as we shall see, amidst the greatest hardships and sufferings by that same Vital whose delicate health and illness and weakness were such that it seemed that he could never become a Priest. His prodigious missionary career was to last eight and forty years.

## CHAPTER. FOUR

BE SHEPHERDS TO THE FLOCK GOD HAS GIVEN YOU. CARRY OUT YOUR CHARGE AS GOD WOULD HAVE IT DONE, CORDIALLY, NOT AS DRUDGES, GENEROUS, .... NOT TYRANNIZING.... BUT SETTING AN EXAMPLE, AS THE BEST YOU MAY, TO THE WHOLE FLOCK.

—I Peter V, 3

Bishop Taché accompanied Father Grandin to the distant Mission of Ile à la Crosse. The forest being impenetrable, the voyage had to be made by water and the travellers were glad to find room on one of the large Hudson Bay barges which, laden with merchandise of every description, was going far into the Northwest. When the wind was favourable, the sail was hoisted; when the wind fell, the men plied their oars. The barge followed the Red River to Lake Winnipeg, crossed this large body of water, and then made its way up many small rivers and across countless smaller lakes, until it reached Ile à la Crosse.

Whenever the barges were stopped by rapids or waterfalls or low water, they had to be unloaded and all the baggage and even, at times, the barges themselves, had to be carried past the obstacle to the next river or lake. It is easy to understand how long and trying these "portages" made a journey and, between Lake Winnipeg and Ile à la Crosse, there were no less than thirty-six of them. They were not made over good roads or even decent trails but through mud, swamps, and forests, as well as up and down steep hills, as the rain at times and burning sun at others beat down on the heavily-laden travellers.

When night fell, they stopped, gathered wood, built a huge fire, ate a well-earned but coarse meal and, after saying the beads and night prayers, stretched out on the ground to sleep in the open air.

Great was Father Grandin's joy when he reached Ile à la Crosse (which, we are told, got its name from the fact that the first white men to reach the place saw

the Indians playing lacrosse) and met Father Végreville whom he had seen, years before, at the Seminary in France. And when, in the chapel, he heard the Indians so enthusiastically sing a hymn in their native tongue, he burst into tears of joy and felt himself fully rewarded for the hardships he had just undergone.

After a short stay, he pushed on and, finally, on August 6th, the Feast of the Transfiguration, reached Nativity Mission, on the shores of Lake Athabaska.

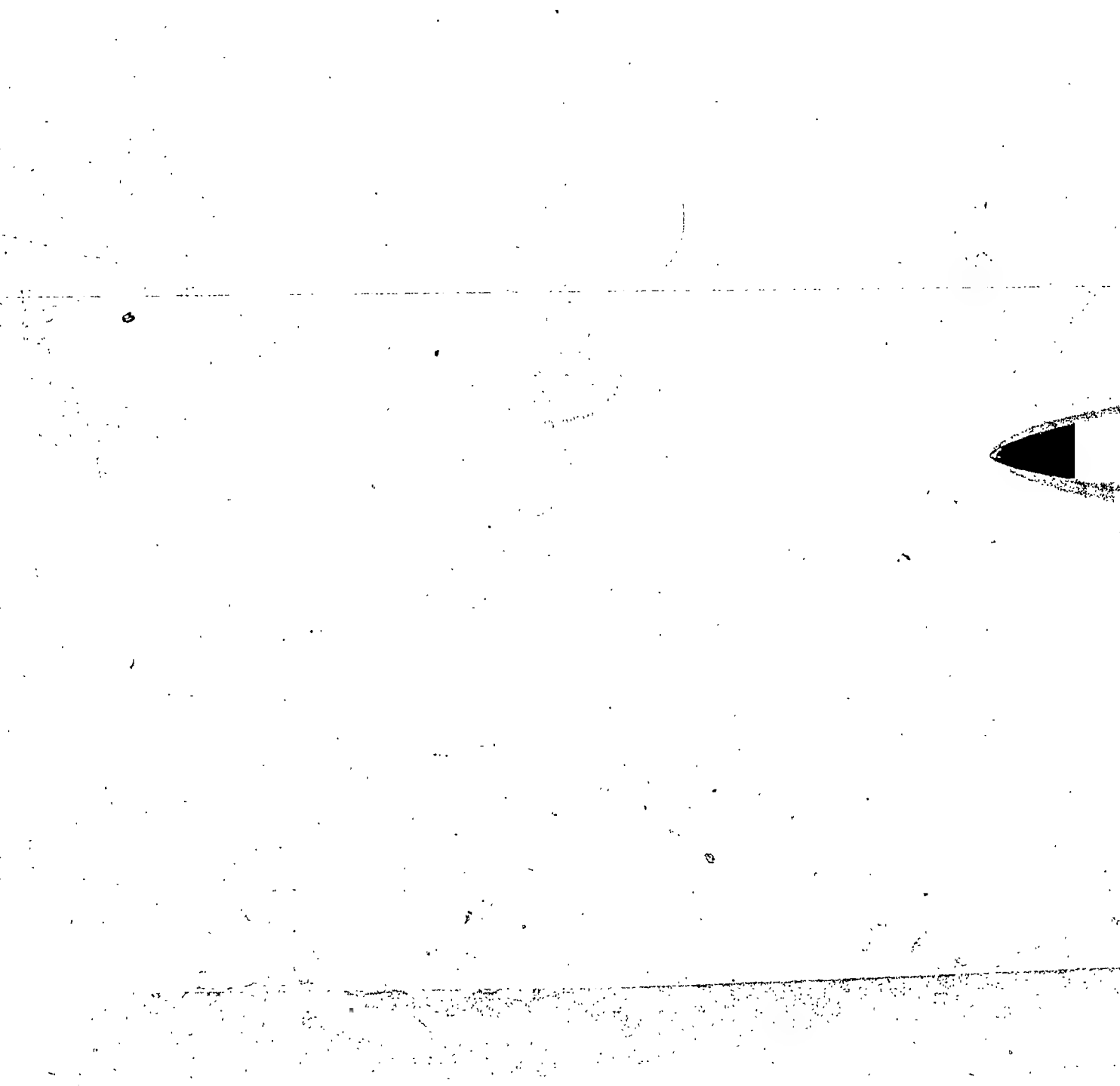
This flourishing Mission had been founded, on a beautiful site, in 1848, by Father Taché who had there found Indians so well instructed by the Tourangeau family that he was able to baptize 194 of them during the three weeks which he spent in their midst.

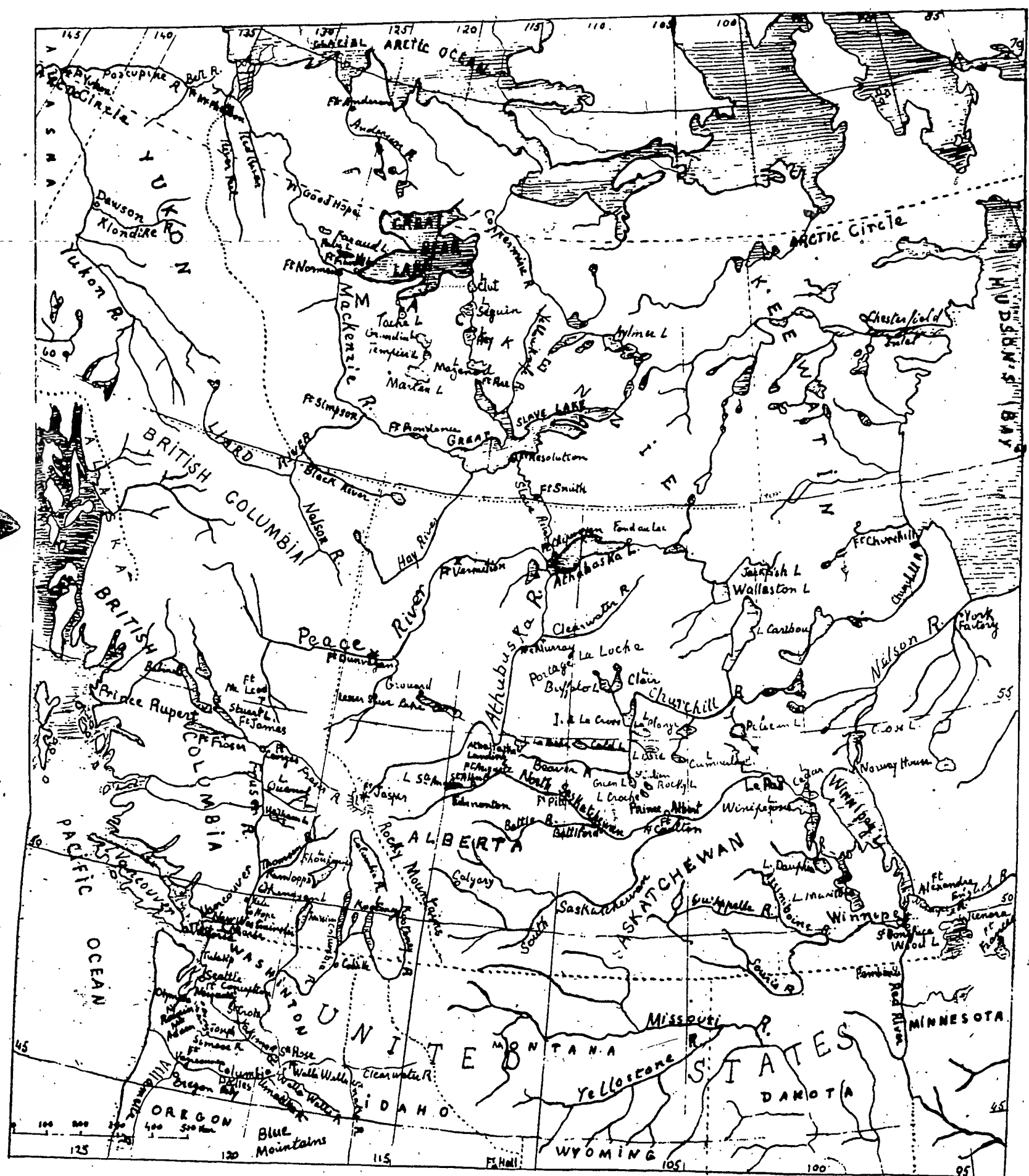
When Father Grandin arrived at this Mission (1855) he was warmly welcomed by Father Faraud and Brother Alexis. What poverty was theirs! There was scarcely anything in their miserable log cabin (which measured sixteen feet by ten) or in their small log church. Fir boughs served as a roof and pieces of parchment, through which you could hardly see, as window panes.

The Indians who frequented this Mission were nearly all Montagnais and belonged chiefly to the tribes known as Caribou-Eaters, Dog Ribs, Yellow Knives, Hareskins, etc. They came from as far away in the extreme North as the Barren Lands and the mouths of the Mackenzie.

Although less ferocious and hostile than the Crees or Blackfeet, the Montagnais were real barbarians before they became Christians. When, for instance, the old people could no longer follow their tribe during the hunting season, they were left behind to die of starvation. Women, whether they were maidens, wives, or mothers, were held in utter contempt. They were flogged, scalped or mutilated for little or no reason. The hardest work fell to their lot. The Montagnais had only one word to signify "my daughter" and "my dog." Little wonder then that countless baby girls were murdered! This and polygamy were found among these Indians by the first missionaries.







When the Priests first came, only the men approached and listened to them. The women could not imagine that the glad tidings were for such contemptible creatures as they and, so, timid and terrified, they kept their distance.

We might add that the most elementary laws of morality seemed unknown. The Indians' words and actions were the basest, the most disgusting and sickening that could be imagined.

The little we have said suggests how repulsive from a natural point of view were these poor people whom the missionaries had come to convert, that is to say to make believers in God, honest, chaste, charitable, and human. The missionaries found men at their vilest and, for this state of affairs, not a few white men were greatly to blame.

When Father Grandin arrived, he found that, thanks to his Oblate predecessors, the work of regeneration had been begun and was already producing gratifying results.

Profiting by Father Grandin's arrival and leaving Brother Alexis at the Mission with him, Father Faraud set out on a long apostolic journey into the North. Father Grandin was able to take over Father Faraud's work. His great kindness, prudence, mildness, and perseverance enabled him to consolidate his Superior's work and to extend it farther. At this time and indeed throughout his apostolic career, the words of St. Paul could aptly be applied to him: "I made myself the servant of all that I might gain the more. To the weak I became weak that I might gain the weak. I became all things to all men, that I might save all. And I do all things for the Gospel's sake."

The Indians soon learned to know and appreciate him. One of them once said to him: "How good the God you preach must be since you yourself are so good." After hearing one of his sermons, an Indian said to him: "Father, I now understand that women have a soul like ours. When you told us that the Son of God chose a

woman for His Mother, I understood that women have a soul and can go to Heaven just the same as men." On another occasion, an Indian, who had decided to be baptized brought his two wives with him and said to Father Grandin: "Now that I may have only one wife, tell me which one to keep."

When he told a Montagnais woman that she might receive Holy Communion, she could scarcely believe her ears. "Can this be true?" she asked. "I could not have dreamed that Holy Communion could be given to a woman."

The Montagnais, living by hunting and fishing, were, like other Indian tribes, nomadic. This made it necessary, on several occasions, for Father Grandin to carry Holy Viaticum with him for great distances. On these occasions he was filled with joy as he carried the Redeemer of the world through those vast solitudes to the poor souls for whom that Redeemer had shed His blood.

Thanks to the proselytizing zeal of his converts, Father Grandin's apostolic influence was carried far and wide. Many a time groups of Indians, whom he had never met, came to him saying: "Our hearts are black with sin; baptize us; give us that water which makes our hearts clean."

Thus passed his first year among the Indians. During the winter of 1855-1856, the Centigrade thermometer registered 45 degrees below zero. How he must have suffered in his miserable hut even when he had a fire! What dangers and obstacles he encountered as he travelled on snowshoes or by sleigh! And still he was able to write to his father: "My health and my happiness are all that can be desired. It is true that I have no bread and as for drink only water (sometimes with a little tea in it). I cannot give you an idea of the severity of the cold but I keep busy and I am perfectly happy. Pray for my Indians especially as you are not entirely unknown to them. The other day, an old Indian said to me: 'How I would like to see your aged

father!' 'Why?' I asked. 'Because I would like to thank him for letting you come here.' 'You will see him in Heaven,' I replied. 'That is true,' he said, 'but I would like to see him before I die. I would like to give him my hat.'

'Now, my dear father, were he to give you his hat, he would consider himself very generous and, in fact, he would be, especially as he is poor. His hat, a fur hat, would fetch a fancy price in France and many a Parisian lady would be proud of the muff that could be made of it.

"I received all your letters although some of them were two years old. Time has not made them less precious." This letter and others suggest the deep affection which the young missionary had for his relatives.

He mentioned his food. At every meal it was nearly always the same: fresh or dried fish without any condiment. Whenever they were fortunate in the hunt, the Montagnais were generous to him and gave him meat—caribou, moose, buffalo, bear, beaver or wild duck. Bread was unknown. Of course, he had pemmican, that is meat cured in the sun, pounded and reduced to a powder, thrown into boiling grease, and then placed in sacks of skin to harden. To eat it, one had first to chop it into small pieces with a hatchet and then, provided that one's teeth were exceptionally good, to try to chew it. This done, one could then, by dint of long practice, learn to digest it.

The most trying season for Father Grandin was the spring when the soft snow and melting ice made long trips impossible so that he had to spend most of the season at home while the Indians roamed the woods far away from him.

Before closing this chapter we should describe the snowshoes and dog sleds which were used for travelling during the winter did we not feel that our readers are sufficiently acquainted with them. The dogs, used to draw the sleds, were exceptionally strong and for twelve

hours a day, as long as the journey lasted, three or four of them could haul a load weighing up to five hundred pounds. They travelled from twenty-five to thirty miles a day and all the food they required was a dried fish or a piece of pemmican which they were given when the evening halt was made. We shall have more to say of them later when we speak of Father Grandin's missionary journeys.

The longest trip which he undertook during the winter of which we have been speaking was one of about 120 miles along the Salt River to visit the famous patriarchal Half-breed Françoise Beaulieu. After taking six days to reach his destination, he spent two truly apostolic months with this excellent Catholic and his relatives. We shall meet this worthy Beaulieu on more than one occasion and it will always be a pleasure for us to do so.

## CHAPTER FIVE

THREE TIMES IT MADE ME ENTREAT THE LORD TO RID ME OF IT, BUT HE TOLD ME, MY GRACE IS ENOUGH FOR THEE; MY GRACE FINDS FULL SCOPE IN THY WEAKNESS.

—II Cor. XII. 8-9

After navigation had opened in the summer of 1856, Father Grandin was delighted with the unexpected visit of Bishop Taché, from the south, and of Father Grollier who was returning from the north. A little later Father Farand arrived.

These zealous missionaries, instead of taking a well-deserved rest, preached a fifteen day mission to the Indians. The latter showed great enthusiasm during the mission and even more at the close when a huge cross was erected on a nearby hill and solemnly blessed.

When the Bishop left Nativity Mission, he took Father Grollier with him to Ile à la Crosse and he told Father Grandin soon to expect a letter telling him to go to another field of labour.





*Bishop Grandin shortly after his consecration  
He was then 30 years old*

After the Bishop's departure, Father Grandin set out for the Mission of Our Lady of Sorrows, another post on Lake Athabaska, about 150 miles distant. Here the Caribou-Eaters, who greatly needed his services, received him with unfeigned joy. His work done, he returned to headquarters where Father Farand told him that the Bishop's letter had not yet arrived. In fact the Hudson Bay barges had brought no mail at all and the missionaries concluded that this letter and others had been lost.

Having received no orders from Bishop Taché and recalling his words that Father Grandin was to be sent to a new field of labour, they decided that, to comply with what they considered the Bishop's will, Father Grandin should go north to Great Slave Lake to take Father Grollier's place.

He left immediately by canoe. Several days later, at one of the portages he found Bishop Tache's letter, carefully wrapped in birch bark and suspended from the branch of a tree. In an accompanying note, Mr. Anderson, Hudson Bay Factor, explained that he had forgotten to leave the Priests' mail at the Mission and added that he deeply regretted the oversight. In the letter, the Bishop ordered Father Grollier to return to the north and Father Grandin to proceed to Ile à la Crosse.

Father Grandin immediately retraced his steps and we may imagine Father Farand's surprise at seeing him return to the Mission so soon.

Father Grandin's trip to Ile à la Crosse was so filled with mishaps and hardships that it took twenty-two days. His birch bark canoe was an old one and, of his two companions, one was nearly blind and the other was a boy of fifteen. For provisions they had only some powdered fish of which Brother Alexis had tried to make pemmican.

The canoe, far from watertight, let in the water to such an extent that the missionary's legs were soon numb with cold. The rocks tore holes in the birch bark and



again and again the canoe had to be repaired. To add to the travellers' hardships, the rain fell almost incessantly so that, after being drenched all day, they had to sleep on the wet ground. There were also those long, arduous portages. No wonder then, that, when he finally reached Ile à la Crosse, Father Grandin was worn out, running a high temperature, and severely ill.

He spent the winter (1857-1858) at Ile à la Crosse where he soon recovered from the effects of his journey and immediately set himself to his apostolic work. There were always about a thousand fervent Christians at this place and, at certain seasons, there were almost countless other Indians who came from all directions to sell their furs at the local Trading Post. The missionary spent busy days and nights instructing and ministering to these people. The work was hard and without let-up but Father Grandin loved it and rejoiced that God had chosen him to do so much good. To speak to them of God's love for us, to wear himself out for them, to suffer with and for them, to rejoice and to weep with them, to do all he could for God and for them, how happy this made him!

Father Grandin had been called to Ile à la Crosse, a post comparatively near to the Bishop of St. Boniface, not to remain indefinitely there but for another reason. For while at Lake Athabaska and, later, at Ile à la Crosse, he was instructing the Indians, splitting wood, building, cooking his own meals, travelling over frozen lakes and snow-covered land, risking his life on river, lake, rapid, or in the forest, plans concerning him, but of which he had no knowledge, were being made.

Towards the end of 1856, at a meeting of the Canadian Hierarchy, held in Quebec, Mgr. Taché had had the Bishops approve his plan of asking Rome to give him a Coadjutor. All present signed a petition to the Sovereign Pontiff requesting that the Founder and Superior General of the Oblates, be permitted to choose and to propose to the Holy See the missionary whom he deemed best fitted for the heavy task. Bishop de Mazen-

od's choice fell upon the Priest upon whom Bishop Taché had prayed that it would fall. And, as a result, on the 11th of September, 1857, Pope Pius IX named Father Grandin Bishop of Satala and Coadjutor to Bishop Taché with the right of succession. The Bishop-elect had not yet attained his 29th year.

The news came to this humble missionary as a bolt from the blue. As he was among his Indians, far from Rome, he remained in blissful ignorance until July, 1858. Here is how, in an affectionately paternal letter dated January 8th, the Superior General broke the news to the Bishop-elect: "My very dear Father Grandin: By the Will of God and of Christ's Vicar upon earth, you are now Bishop of Satala 'in partibus infidelium.' Of course, you will not have to look after the spiritual interests of the infidels living in Satala (which, as you are aware, is in Asia) but you will now, even more than ever, if that be possible, have to give yourself up entirely first to the conversion and later to the sanctification of those infidels among whom you have already accomplished so much.

"In my mind's eye, I see you prostrated by the news, weeping and, in your humility, striving to find an excuse to decline this honour. You will find strength to accept this honour and this burden in the thought that it is imposed on you by obedience and in the knowledge that, in the field in which you have to labour, the mitre will be a crown of thorns. If you are a Bishop, it is by the will of the Sovereign Pontiff and also by the will of your Superior General. You are, on that account, assured of God's grace and assistance in your work. Now that the Holy Father has spoken, the episcopacy has become for you the road to heaven. In it you will sanctify yourself and the fruits of your ministry will be even greater than they have been in the past. Arise now from your despondency and rejoice in the Lord that, as it has come to you entirely through obedience, the episcopacy will prove in your case the good work of which St. Paul speaks.

"And now, a word about myself. It is my privilege, as their spiritual father, to consecrate those Oblates whom God chooses to be Bishops. I have therefore written to our dearly beloved Bishop of St. Boniface telling him that, in your case, I claim this privilege and begging him to allow me to communicate the Holy Ghost to you as I did to him.

"I expect to be granted this consolation especially as I understand that it is almost as easy for you to come to France from your distant Missions as it would be for you to go to Canada. (At that time the North West Territories were not part of Canada.) Your episcopal trousseau will be made in this country and, moreover, after your consecration, you will be able to do a great deal of good in France encouraging those who still hesitate to go to the painful foreign Missions. You will also be able to meet your present benefactors and, please God, to find new ones. Do not let anything, except absolute impossibility, prevent you from acceding to my wishes.

"Farewell, my dear Bishop and my dear son. I count on your fervent prayers and I assure you of mine.

"Looking forward to that beautiful day on which I shall impose hands on you and raise you to the episcopacy, I cordially embrace you."

Convinced that he was entirely unfit to be a Bishop, the humble missionary sought to escape the mitre by alleging his youth, his ignorance, his inaptitude and his wretched health. This is how he ended his letter to Mgr. de Mazenod: "But my Lord, really you do not know me. Under these conditions, when you appear before the Sovereign Judge you may have reason to regret that you gave your consent to my being chosen." In later years, he used to say: "Of all the qualities required in a missionary Bishop, I had only the desire to serve our dear God and to make Him loved . . . and also a pair of long legs well fitted to travel on snowshoes."

Hardly had the young missionary succeeded in con-

vincing himself that a more able person would be chosen when he had to face a situation which might have ruined the Mission at Ile à la Crosse.

The Montagnais, like all Indians, are very superstitious and they are easily impressed by dreams. Consequently, they fall an easy prey to imposters. One day, not far from the Mission, a young son of Chief Bear Foot declared that he was the Son of God. "I came to this earth many years ago," said he, "and the white men put me to death. I have come again and this time I will reject the white men and make the Montagnais my chosen people. Give away all your worldly possessions, burn all your tents, kill all your dogs!"

The young man was insane but many Indians believed in him and left the missionary to follow the new Messiah. Father Grandin saw that he must act with despatch and energy. "Do not face these Indians," counselled a friend, "you are risking your life and you are the Bishop-elect." With a smile, Father Grandin replied: "Even a Bishop is not quite as important as a Son of God." He immediately got into a canoe and, two or three days later, found the new Messiah and his followers. As the missionary drew near, the son of Bear Foot cried out to him: "Come, my child, and I will shew you the Tables of the Law. Theos! Theos!" And then, when Father Grandin was near, the man began to strike him with his magic birch bark roll. Unperturbed, the Priest asked the man a few questions in Latin and in French because the latter had boasted that he could speak all languages. Of course, the Indian could neither answer nor even understand the questions. Then, turning to the man's followers, the missionary cried out: "This poor fellow, who pretends to be the Son of God, is insane and, if he has a spirit in him, as he says he has, it is the evil spirit! What fools you have been! He told you to give away, burn or destroy your belongings and you did so. Tell him that, to prove that he is the Son of God, you want him to give you back a single piece of all the clothing you have destroyed

at his command and, after he has done that, tell him to make the leaves and the grass turn green."

The blow was decisive. The man lost his following and, before long, not only his relatives but he himself also returned to the Church which they had left.

The missionary was not so successful in his attempt to escape the episcopacy. Bishop de-Mazenod wrote: "I do not approve of your objections and, furthermore, I forbid you to make any others. Come immediately and do not wait until I am dead before you obey my orders."

Bishop Taché wrote: "You must make haste. It will soon be two years since the Pope appointed you and he already considers you an old Bishop. Were he, in fact, to write to you he would address you as 'Venerable Brother'."

—Convinced now that to object further would be not only useless but contrary to God's will, Father Grandin left his Mission towards the end of August, 1859, and reached Marseilles on the 3rd of November. The Founder greeted him warmly and then said: "You will be a Bishop, that is my will. And, when you are a Bishop, you will be all the more an Oblate."

## CHAPTER SIX

THE GRACE OF THE LORD CAME UPON ME IN A FULL TIDE OF  
FAITH AND LOVE, THE LOVE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS.

—I Tim. I, 14

Father Grandin spent the days preceding his consecration at the Bishop's residence and at the Oblate Scholasticate in Marseilles. Privileged were they to whom it was given to see these two great Servants of God, Bishop de Mazenod, in the majesty of his years and holiness, and Bishop Grandin, young as age goes but old in virtue and in suffering, as the latter, come from a distant land, prepared to receive the Holy Ghost from the former. The Venerable Founder of the Oblates



LE SERVITEUR DE DIEU  
MGR C.-J.-E. de MAZENOD,  
*Fondateur des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée.*

*Bishop Charles Eugene de Mazenod, Bishop of Marseilles  
Founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate*

wrote: "During the days he has spent with me since his arrival, I have been able to appreciate even more than I did before the eminent sanctity of this young prelate. He will never be forgotten in the various communities in which he stayed. Since his arrival, he has set us a perfect example of obedience to the slightest points of the Rule. On the eve of his consecration he begged the Superior of the Scholasticate to allow him to humiliate himself by kissing the feet of the Professors and of the students but, I deeply regret to say, the permission was not accorded."

On November 30th, 1859, in St. Martin's Church, the provisional Cathedral of Marseilles, assisted by Bishop Jeancard, auxiliary Bishop of the diocese, and by Bishop Jordany of Fréjus, Bishop de Mazenod consecrated the young Prelate. At the imposing ceremony there were present his brother, the Abbé Jean Grandin, and his youngest sister, his devoted friend and benefactor, the Abbé Sébaux, and many Priests from the dioceses of Le Mans and Laval who presented him with a crosier and part of his episcopal vestments.

The following morning, assisted by the Abbés Sébaux and Grandin, he celebrated his first Pontifical Mass at the Oblate Shrine of Notre-Dame de la Garde. In the sanctuary were hung his so appropriately chosen coat of arms and motto: a reed, the tip of which rested on the Cross, and the words: "God hath chosen the weak things of this world."

That evening, Bishop de Mazenod entered the following in his diary: "This has been one of the happiest days of my life for, this morning, I consecrated good, holy, humble Father Grandin. For this great day he had prepared himself by five long years of suffering in the unbelievably painful Missions of the frozen north."

"The Bishop of St. Boniface and I did well to choose him. How charming is his simplicity and what attachment to the Congregation! How painful the sacrifice to him! What thoughtfulness, what goodness of heart,

what charity, what devotedness! One cannot but love him. Everyone who sees him affectionately esteems and reveres him. I cannot express what I felt while consecrating this Bishop."

A little later Bishop de Mazenod wrote to Mgr. Taché: "Oh, this excellent Bishop Grandin! What a perfect missionary! He is esteemed and revered wherever he goes. All his thoughts are for the greater glory of God, the salvation of souls and the interests of his far-off Missions!"

To his great regret the future Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, Mgr. Guibert, O.M.I., found it impossible to be present but he sent his cordial, fraternal congratulations to the new Bishop.

After spending a few days at Marseilles, Bishop Grandin went to see his aged father and his other relatives and friends. "I was so overcome by the honour which had been bestowed on me in spite of my youth and unworthiness," he wrote, "that I felt almost ashamed to go home. I had decided not to take my mitre." Bishop de Mazenod heard of this decision and . . . Bishop Grandin took his mitre.

How shall we describe the happiness of the Bishop's venerable father? He could only look at his son and weep. How proud and happy were his brothers and sisters and also his two benefactresses, Sisters Anne-Marie and Françoise, who had done so much for him! At the Précigné Seminary, where it had been young Vital's duty to ring the bell, the Superior presented the bell to him and requested that every year, in his far-distant diocese, on a pre-arranged date, the Bishop should ring the bell to proclaim an extraordinary holiday for the Seminarians.

In the parishes in which the Abbés Sébaux, Grandin, and the aged Blanchard were pastors, Bishop Grandin was called upon to sing Pontifical High Mass and to preach. His eloquence, sublime in its simplicity, deeply moved his hearers. At the Seminary of Mayenne, the Superior presented the students in Philosophy to the



Bishop and said: "My Lord, take your choice!" Placing his hands on the two nearest him, he replied: "These two will I take." They were the young Leduc and Légeard who, as Oblate missionaries, were to do such excellent work in North-Western Canada.

While at home, Bishop Grandin fell seriously ill and was confined to bed for about six weeks. Under very special care he recovered sufficiently just in time to catch a boat for Canada. He took with him his cousin, the Abbé Grouard, and Father Séguin. At Montreal he obtained five Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns) for a combined orphanage, school and hospital which he intended to found at Ile à la Crosse, and at which he planned to stay during the short intervals between his voyages.

Besides being Coadjutor of St. Boniface, he was also regional Superior of the North-Western Oblate missions.

When Bishop Grandin, the Priests, and the Sisters drew near to St. Boniface, the entire population of the town, headed by Bishop Taché, went out to welcome them. "The two Bishops," says Father Lestanc, "greeted each other very affectionately. Bishop Taché embraced his Coadjutor with all the warmth with which our dear Founder embraces his missionaries."

Bishop Grandin spent three weeks at St. Boniface where, during the last ten days, he was desperately ill. In vain, however, did Bishop Taché beg to go to Ile à la Crosse in his stead. "I will go," said the heroic Bishop. "To keep me away from my missions would be to kill me."

On the 30th of July, 1860, he had himself carried from his bed of suffering to the roughly made cart which, jolting along through three painful days, finally brought him to the Hudson Bay Company's barge on which he was to travel. During these days Bishop Grandin became so ill that Bishop Taché, who accompanied him, again suggested that he himself go to Ile à la Crosse in place of his Coadjutor, but the latter

pleaded so eloquently that he won his point and went forward with Father Séguin and Brôther Boisramé, who were to aid Father Grollier at Good Hope, and with the Grey Nuns who were to devote themselves to all the works of charity at Ile à la Crosse.

They journeyed on amidst hardships and, on August 3rd, were prevented by a severe storm from going further. Profiting by the enforced leisure, the Bishop wrote to his Superior General: "My present position is not exactly episcopal. I am camped on a sand-bank, and winds from all directions beat upon me. It is here on this sand-bank that a fierce storm, in the face of which we could not advance, forced us to pitch camp last night. We did our best to sleep but the rain beat down upon us. This storm is a real blessing: for the first time since we left St. Boniface, Father Séguin and I were able to offer up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass this morning. My illness has gone and so rapidly are my health and appetite returning that I am really astounded."

When the storm had sufficiently abated, the journey was again begun. It was made under the most trying circumstances; there were thirty-six portages, continuous rain, frequent storms and mishaps of various descriptions so that Ile à la Crosse was not reached until October 4th. Here Fathers Moulin and Végreville joyfully greeted the travellers and then all set to work. Besides his episcopal and missionary duties, Bishop Grandin had to undertake those of a mason and carpenter. With Father Moulin's assistance, he completed the Sisters' residence, added a refectory to the Priests' cabin and, with the two Priests and the Brother, took his turn fishing through the ice. Fishing, under the circumstances, was not exactly a pleasure. "It was about 30 degrees below zero," writes one of the missionaries, "and every once in a while we had to stop fishing to run around, jump and beat our sides to keep from freezing."

Knowing how ill his Coadjutor had been, Bishop

Taché made it a point to visit him as soon as possible. He arrived by canoe unexpectedly on the Feast of All Saints. While the two Bishops were together, they decided to request Rome to divide their immense diocese. They felt that the North-Western portion (Athabaska-Mackenzie) should be a separate Vicariate. Eighteen months later the Sovereign Pontiff approved of this plan and, on May 3rd, 1862, made Father Faraud Vicar Apostolic of that region.

But we are still in the year 1860 and are about to accompany Bishop Grandin on the heroic pastoral visitation which took him to the Polar Circle.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

WITH US CHRIST'S LOVE IS A COMPELLING FORCE

II Cor. V. 14

In order to visit his fellow Oblate missionaries, scattered in groups of two's and three's throughout the boundless Northland, Bishop Grandin set out on a journey which was to last three years. Leaving Fathers Moulin and Végreville at Ile à la Crosse and taking Father Séguin and Brother Boisramé with him, he started out on June 2nd, the Feast of Corpus Christi, after having presided at the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. During this journey he kept a diary in the form of a series of letters addressed to Bishop de Mazenod who had once said to him: "I follow you step by step over your boundless snow and ice . . . Poor children, when I think of what miserable food you have to eat and how often you have to go hungry, the fork drops from my hand." Bishop Grandin kept his diary faithfully but his Superior General was never to read it for, unknown to the young Bishop, his father in God, Charles Eugene Joseph de Mazenod, Founder of the Oblate Congregation and Bishop of Marseilles, had gone to his reward on the 21st day of May, 1861.



Mother Mann, Provincial Superior, with the group of Sisters who opened a foundation at Portage La Pêche in 1943

The first stop was made at Lac la Loche where many Indians and Half-breeds had assembled to meet their new Pastor. Two busy days followed: confessions and instructions almost without let-up, the administration of other Sacraments and two Pontifical High Masses celebrated under a canopy of blankets and with only one candle which was frequently blown out.

From Nativity Mission, the Bishop wrote on June 20th: "Four years ago it took me fourteen days to get here from Lac la Loche; this time the journey took ten days less although the rain poured down continuously during the last two days and although our canoe was severely damaged while descending one of the rapids."

At Nativity Mission, he was warmly greeted by Fathers Faraud and Clut, two future Bishops, and by the devoted Brother Alexis who was to meet a tragic death. Twelve years of exceptionally severe privations and of hard work had greatly impaired the strength of Father Faraud and, so, the Bishop ordered him to Ile à la Crosse to recuperate. Father Séguin, who was to have gone on to Good Hope, was temporarily left to take Father Faraud's place.

After ten days of intense ministry at Nativity Mission, the Bishop set out again. "I am travelling by canoe with my faithful companion, Brother Boisramé," he wrote, so he supposed, to Bishop de Mazenod. "Dearly beloved Father, if you could only give me more Lay Brothers, I would never undertake a journey without one of them. Besides the Brother, I have with me two Indians and a young boy (Jean Baptiste Pépin) who will take Brother Boisramé's place after we reach Good Hope. This boy will be my valet, infirmarian (should I fall sick), cook, sacristan, and, should the need arise, also my Vicar General. The good Brother is taking great pains to prepare Baptiste to fill the lofty position to which I have destined him."

The voyage became more and more difficult. The river was encumbered by uprooted trees and other

debris and many times all had to get out of the canoe and drag it along as they waded through the mud and water.

By the night of July 3rd, they had come to Salt River where the venerable Beaulieu lived. This hospitable old man rejoiced to see the Bishop but was deeply grieved at the thought that he could not keep him as he was out of provisions. "I told him," writes Bishop Grandin, "that, such being the case, I would sit up all night hearing confessions and would leave after having celebrated Mass the following morning. They were deeply grieved at this, but how could I take even a little of their scanty supply of food? Had we eaten our own provisions there, we could not have gone on to our destination. Then they said that they thought they could catch enough carp to do for a few days and I readily agreed to remain with them.

"This venerable patriarch took me into what he called his chapel. The old altar, formerly used by the missionaries, was still standing and Beaulieu had adorned it with all his holy pictures. It was in this chapel that, every Friday, Sunday, and Feast-Day, he gathered his children and their children and the Indians to sing hymns, to say the beads, and to listen to his advice and reprimands."

As the travellers were about to depart, July 5th, Beaulieu spoke in the name of all: "My Father and My Lord," he began, "before you were made High Priest, you came to see us and to instruct us. So that we should remember your words, you blessed and erected a large cross in our midst. Yesterday you blessed our cemetery. I will see to it that no unbaptized person and no one who has led an evil life is buried in it.

"My Father, whenever in the past I asked you to send a Priest to stay here, you always told me to ask the High Priest. You are now the High Priest and I ask you to give us a missionary to stay with us. The head man of the Fur Traders is keeping \$150.00 for me. That is all the money I have but I will keep it to help

the Priest who comes and I and my children and their children will do all we can for him."

Deeply moved, the Bishop promised to do his utmost to have a Priest from Great Slave Lake visit the Beaulieu's every year. He asked all to pray for the Pope, blessed them and, accompanied by Beaulieu's eldest son and an Indian, left to visit lands which he had never seen.

Delayed by many mishaps, the travellers did not reach St. Joseph's Mission, at Fort Resolution, on Great Slave Lake, until the evening of July 8th. The Bishop wrote: "We soon saw a miserable hut, covered with birch bark, surmounted by a cross and surrounded by Indian lodges. As we drew nearer we saw a group of Indians, headed by Fathers Eynard and Gascon and Brother Kearney, on the shore. This was the Mission to which I had expected to be sent. When I saw how poor it was and realized how my fellow missionaries must have suffered there, I could not restrain my tears. A few minutes later, after having greeted the Oblates and their Indians with deep emotion, I followed them to their miserable little chapel."

The chapel was indeed very poor and the tabernacle had only a wooden lock, but how neat and clean this chapel was and with what taste it was adorned! The missionaries' hut was even more miserable than the chapel. Owing to a shipwreck, they had received nothing for three long years. The few remaining sheets of paper were parsimoniously used to record marriages, births and deaths, and these were recorded in the fewest possible words. There was not sufficient paper on which to write letters and, therefore, for three years, their Superiors, relatives and friends had not heard from them. There was hardly any furniture. The Bishop wrote: "A few days before my arrival, Brother Kearney had made a table so that I should not have to write on my lap."

During the three weeks which he spent at this

post, the Bishop preached a mission. "Poor Fathers," he wrote, "they are only two and they do the work of six. Last winter Father Gascon made a trip over ground so rough that the dogs were unable to drag the sled on which were packed his chapel and provisions and he and an Indian had to take the place of the dogs. They carried with them only what was essential, and, for clothing, had only what they were wearing. After spending several weeks among the Indians, Father Gascon could no longer bear the vermin which devoured him and gratefully accepted the loan of a shirt from an employee of the Trading Post. That, My Lord, is the life of your children in the far North."

Bishop Grandin set out from Fort Resolution on July 26th, leaving Brother Bojsramé there to try to grow a few vegetables and taking Brother Kearney to help out at Fort Good Hope. To paddle the canoe, he took two Indians, one a Montagnais and the other a Yellow-Knife.

In a small canoe, which was much the worse for wear and which leaked badly, they had the audacity to cross the immense Great Slave Lake. Every time they stopped to pitch camp, the first thing they had to do was to dry all their clothing. On July 30th they reached Big Island, a post established by Father Grollier, O.M.I., in 1858, and attended from Fort Resolution. For six days and nights the Bishop taught catechism, preached, confessed, visited the sick and held services practically without intermission. The fruits of his burning zeal were most abundant.

Then, as Father Duchaussois tells us in his captivating book "Mid Snow and Ice" (pages 264-265), "Mgr. Grandin, considering Big Island inconvenient in some ways, and too exposed to storms and floods, looked out for a better site. He followed in his canoe the windings of the broad Mackenzie and its many islands. He crossed that part of 'the Giant River' which is called Castor or Beaver Lake. He went down a very long and noisy





*Ascending the rapids on English River. Bishop Grandin passed here several times*

but, not dangerous rapid, and found on the right bank a promontory, where high grass or weeds promised a fertile soil, and a half-burned forest promised wood enough for buildings as well as for fuel. He landed there. The place was about forty miles down the river from Big Island. As he looked over the waters, the setting sun was casting golden rays over the green vesture of the nearest islands, where the river broadens out into another lake. At the foot of the promontory an eddying backwater formed a little bay, very safe for boats, and in the waters around were shoals of fish seemingly asking for someone to take them. The Bishop said to himself: Here is the place for a Mission, one which ought to be the Providence of the other Missions in this desolate north. As he walked upon the shore, a boat of the Hudson Bay Company came along, bringing Mr. Ross, the chief official of the Mackenzie district. After the first polite exchanges, Mgr. Grandin said: 'Mr. Ross, I am anxious to select this spot for a Mission, and I am very happy that the chief magistrate of the district is here present himself, as well as these witnesses', (a number of Catholic Half-breeds). Mr. Ross did not look any too pleased. In fact, he was heard to say afterwards: 'I told that fool of a . . . (the Protestant Minister) that this would be the best place for him to build a church.' However, politeness is politeness and first come first served is the rule in new countries. So Mr. Ross contented himself with remarking to the Bishop that it would be very hard to succeed in such a place, in the face of Protestant opposition. 'They are rich,' he said, 'and you are not.' But the Bishop replied, 'Oh, we are accustomed to rough it, as you know. Besides, money is not enough in a country like this: to know how to do without things is of more importance.' So was founded this new Mission, destined to be the mother-house of the most northerly Missions, and the beginning of a humble See for Athabaska-Mackenzie, for whose formation into a Vicariate Bishop Taché was then nego-

tiating in Rome. It was to be the home also of an orphanage and hospital for the poor and helpless Indians. On account of what he intended it to be for the Catholic religion in those almost inaccessible regions, Mgr. Grandin called it Providence Mission. So it is called still, or, since 1915, Our Lady of Providence. After a time, so many Indians assembled at the new missionary post that the Hudson Bay Company, too, made Fort Providence the successor of Big Island Fort.

"August 6th, feast of the Transfiguration, 1861, was the day on which Mgr. Grandin chose the spot on which was to begin the perpetual real Presence, in humble guise, of Him whose glory shone upon Mount Thabor. Brother Kearney, who was travelling with the Bishop, made a very high cross of wood during the night. In the morning, the Bishop said Mass in his tent, planted and blessed the cross, and then, taking to his canoe, continued his journey farther north, after he and Brother Kearney had set up posts marking off the land claimed for a Mission site."

The barge on which Ross had come brought letters to Bishop Grandin who, not yet having heard of the death of the Founder of the Oblates, wrote to him by return mail: "I have just learned of the cruel trials of the Sovereign Pontiff and of your own serious illness. I need not tell you how deeply this news affects me and what tears it has caused me to shed."

Losing no time, he descended the mighty Mackenzie to Fort Simpson where, with Fathers Séguin and Gascon, who had joined him, he catechized the Indians. Then, with Father Gascon, he made a side trip up the Liard to St. Raphael's Mission at Fort Liard. Speaking of the trip, the Bishop says in his diary: "While I was celebrating Mass, Father Gascon acted as assistant Priest, altar boy, choir leader, beadle and policeman. Without stopping the Montagnais hymn he was singing, he frequently left the sanctuary either to make those Indians, who stood at the door, come to the front of the

church, or to chase out the dogs. Sometimes, in the middle of a verse, he would stop singing long enough to cry out to some who were talking: 'Silence, there! Don't you know you are in church?'

"These are the first Indians I have met who have no religious ideas. You founded the Oblates to preach the Gospel to the most forsaken. We missionaries of the Northwest are, I believe, those who most literally fulfill that blessed calling."

The Bishop left St. Raphael's, September 12th, and, after a voyage full of mishaps, reached Sacred Heart Mission (Fort Simpson) in the afternoon of the 16th. Practically all the Indians had gone and there was not a guide to be had. With young Pépin, he remained there until the end of the month. This delay proved almost fatal as it allowed the weather favourable for travelling to slip by.

Accompanied by two Hare-Skin Indians, the Bishop and the boy left on the 30th. "Bad Weather," he writes, "set in on October 4th. That night I managed to reach St. Teresa's (Fort Norman) where there was no Priest or chapel and there I spent the night. After celebrating Mass next morning, seeing that it would be impossible to return to Good Hope by water and knowing that walking over the newly-formed ice would be too hard on my young companion, I left him behind and went forward in spite of a very strong north wind and of the snow which was falling heavily.

"It was not excessively cold but we felt the cold a great deal as we were not yet hardened to it. That night we slept in the snow in this early snow which, unlike the snow of mid-winter, is wet. During the day, whenever we went ashore, it stuck to our snow-shoes and made them painfully heavy.

"On the 6th, the north wind became so strong and so bitterly cold that we could not advance against it. Winter had set in and the ice had already formed along the river banks. The wind subsided towards evening

and so we travelled all night. We were now able to travel by water, but it was so cold that I could neither paddle nor sleep. As we drew near to the shore, a huge block of ice shattered our canoe. We were beginning to wonder how or if we should ever reach our destination when Divine Providence came to our aid. We sighted a Hudson Bay Company barge and, leaving our dinner, our fire and our canoe, we hailed it, got aboard and, late on October 9th, reached Fort Good Hope in the Polar Circle. I went immediately towards the Mission (Our Lady of Good Hope) which was then situated on the heights at quite a distance from where we landed.

“Father Séguin ran out to greet me. ‘Do not be surprised, My Lord,’ he said, ‘if poor Father Grollier comes a bit late and if, when he manages to get here, he is unable to speak . . . he will be all out of breath.’ When Father Grollier came, he could not speak . . . and neither could I. A young missionary in his thirties, hardship, labour and privations had broken him! I offered to help him hobble up the hill but he made signs to tell me not to wait and that he would manage to get back alone.

“On the heights I met Brother Kearney. He had been busy rough-casting the walls of the house with mud when he heard of my arrival and had just finished washing up as I approached the house. He knelt and asked for my blessing. I then went into the miserable hut and looked for the Blessed Sacrament but It was not there. The Fathers explained that, as there was but one room, they had not the help and happiness of our Divine Saviour’s Eucharistic Presence. I knelt down where the Fathers said Mass before cheap images of our Crucified Lord and our Lady of Good Hope. Then Father Grollier arrived and, after sitting for a while on an old crate, he was able to talk. They made me take their only chair. How poor they were!

“‘We are going to have a real feast, My Lord,’ said

Father Grollier, 'We have a beaver and two partridges shot by Father Séguin.' How those poor men would enjoy these delicacies! I asked for some of their dried fish saying, quite truthfully, that I had eaten nothing but meat since August 6th. To make the feast complete, Brother Kearney made some pancakes and—as an added luxury—he set a lighted candle on the table. Such was their poverty that, since their arrival at the Mission, they had never used a candle or a light of any sort except for one candle at Mass. Our beds took up very little room: each of us rolled himself up in his blankets and slept on the bare floor."

Grieved that these men, who had so much to endure, had not the Blessed Sacrament, Bishop Grandin went out to the woods with them, helped fell and roughly hew some trees and build a small alcove to serve as a chapel. They decorated the inside walls with some old fish nets, on which they hung some holy pictures, and they set up an altar. A small box, with a hook for a lock, was used for a tabernacle. Such was the first home of the Blessed Sacrament within the Polar circle. Was the stable of Bethlehem poorer?

The Bishop wrote in his diary: "I have reached our most distant Mission but have not yet come to the end of the world—especially of that poor, unfortunate world which knows not God." He goes on to speak of the Squint-eyed Indians, who lived farther north, and of a group of Eskimos dwelling almost on the shores of the Arctic. He wished to carry the Gospel to them but was unable to do so and it was to be many years before these tribes had a resident missionary.

He spent the three coldest winter months in the miserable hut at Good Hope and, like his companions, split wood, fished for his daily food; washed his clothes and theirs and instructed and ministered to the Indians. To the two Priests and Brother he preached the annual retreat.

That winter (1861-1862) was one of the most severe

winters recorded. The one distraction of these heroic men was the wonderfully beautiful sight, oft repeated, of the Northern Lights.

The Bishop suggested to Father Grollier that he go to some Mission where the food would not be so bad, nor the climate so severe. But the worn-out missionary begged to be allowed to die . . . at his post. He said he could always be of use at the Mission, teaching catechism to his poor Indians thus leaving Father Séguin free to travel. "When the time comes to depart," said he, "a missionary is not usually troubled with a long illness." He was allowed to carry out his program, unto which he remained faithful to the last gasp.

"He worked, he preached, he catechized. In his last days, not being able to speak, he taught by signs. He said Mass for the last time on May 24, 1864. Less than a week later, he entered upon his agony. But he was able to receive Holy Communion twice with perfect consciousness and great devotion, and with ardent longing to be where Jesus is . . .

"In the beginning of his last illness, he had said that he thought that if he had a little milk and some potatoes they would restore him. To find milk or a potato for Father Grollier, someone would have had to travel for half a year. But when the end was really near, he no longer thought of any such gratification. Sometimes he was delirious. Sometimes his cough was troublesome. Very often he spoke, but only of the glory of God, and the salvation of souls, and of his being now of no use upon earth, and of his one desire that the good merciful God would call him to Himself. During his thanksgiving after his last Communion, he prayed with ardent piety, looking now upon the picture of St. Joseph dying in the arms of Jesus and Mary, and now upon the humble tabernacle, which, from his couch of buffalo hide, he could see through the half-drawn curtain of the little sanctuary. And so he died, with a smile upon his lips, at five o'clock in the morning of June 4th, 1864,

being only thirty-eight years of age. 'O My Jesus', he had cried out shortly before he breathed his last. 'I die happy, since I have seen the sacred standard of Thy Cross lifted up at the very ends of the earth.'

"Father Séguin wrote the same day: 'The Indians and the half-breeds came in crowds to see him laid out in soutane, surplice and stole, and holding in his hands his Oblate Cross, which he had kissed so often during his sufferings yesterday. I had covered his face, but the veil was taken away. The people could not tire of looking upon the face of their devoted apostle.'" (Mid Snow and Ice, pages 322-323.)

But to return to the Bishop's trip. He left Our Lady of Good Hope Mission on January 9th, 1862, accompanied by three Indians "of whom one brought a sleigh and four dogs to help us during the first four days of our journey." To reach St. Joseph's Mission (Fort Resolution), the Bishop and the Indians had to travel on snowshoes or by dog-train well over eight hundred miles in the middle of one of the severest winters ever known and in the coldest part of the world. Dear Mother of God, be with them!

## CHAPTER EIGHT

BRETHREN, YOU CAN REMEMBER HOW WE TOILED AND LABOURED ALL THE TIME WE WERE PREACHING GOD'S GOSPEL TO YOU.

—I Thess., II, 9

Let us now, step by step, follow this pioneer of Christ through a journey, the keynote of which is suffering. The better to appreciate what Bishop Grandin went through, let us endeavour to get an idea of what travelling over ice in the north means. "When the freeze-up comes," writes the Bishop, "the ice forms first at the (75 miles wide) mouths of the Mackenzie river and gradually extends southward up the current. The



gigantic, rushing, impetuous torrent carries down with it huge blocks of ice, hurls itself with terrific impact against the frozen surface, rises up as if in wrath and pours itself over the solid ice already formed and covers it with hundreds and thousands of larger and larger blocks, until block piled upon block, a veritable, irregular; almost impassable mass of ice stands mountain high. One who has never seen it cannot picture this fantastic contortion of ice. A solid mass is formed and the process begins again and again farther and farther up the river. To travel over these mountains of ice, one of the party has to go ahead and, with an axe, hew a passage for the dogs and sleighs. As for the nights, when a place to camp has been found, the first thing to do is to remove one's snowshoes and to use them as a shovel or a broom to make a pit in the snow. Evergreen branches are then strewn in this pit, blankets are laid on them, and the bed is ready.

"I did my share the first night but the exertion was too much for me. After that, while my men, accustomed to this work, prepared the bed, I used to half bury myself in the snow so as to try to keep warm until the fire was lighted. I have rarely found anything so attractive as a good campfire.

"After warming my hands and face I used to rub my feet with snow in order to escape the terrible 'snowshoe sickness.' Then snow or ice was melted, tea made, and supper was ready. Our meals invariably consisted of dried meat and tea. Of course, we always had pemmican with us. On this particular occasion, it was made with bear grease and was good. As the days were extremely short, we never stopped for a mid-day meal but, at the risk of breaking our teeth, we endeavoured to chew a little of this concoction as we plodded on.

"After walking, climbing, slipping, falling all day, my appetite was usually good. One evening, however, being more fatigued than usual, I felt a loathing for dried meat and tea and, therefore, decided to gratify

my sensuality. I had been given a little flour and with this, some water and a little pemmican, I made a sort of stew. You should have seen the Indians devour this with their eyes! When it was just about ready, an accident occurred: the pot slipped and fell into the fire and was half filled with charred wood and ashes. As a result, there was plenty of stew for all of us.

"When we had eaten and talked sufficiently and my men had finished their pipes, we knelt down, said our prayers and got under our blankets. While travelling in winter, I always kept my socks on as well as my moccasins and coat during the night. To have more warmth and, at times, not to freeze, we shared our blankets and I shared their vermin. When we awakened in the morning, we frequently found ourselves covered with a layer of snow and we nearly always found that the tips of our noses had been touched by frost. Our breakfast was a repetition of our supper—and that during the whole trip."

One of the men left the party on the fifth day. As for the actual travelling, Bishop Grandin writes: "One of the men goes ahead, axe in hand, I follow, then come the dogs, drawing our provisions and theirs, and the second Indian trudges behind the sled so as to push when necessary.

"My clothes are far from episcopal; they are not even clerical. Except for a flannel shirt, they are all made of leather. My trousers are moose-skin, my outer shirt is caribou hide with the hair on the inside and over it, I wear a large moose-skin blouse. My cross and my episcopal ring hang from a cord around my neck. My finger would be frozen in no time were I to wear my ring on it. From another cord hang two large sacks made of white bear-skin; they are my mitts and I have to keep my hands in them all the time. I wear a beaver-skin hat over which is a shawl to cover my neck, ears and part of my face. All this peculiar head-dress is enveloped in a huge hood.

"Within half an hour of my putting it on, all the clothing near my face is covered with ice due to my breathing. When there is too much ice, I change the position of the shawl.

"On one occasion, for some reason or other, I called to the man ahead of me. He took one look at me, ran up, took hold of my nose, and vigorously rubbed it with snow: my nose had ben severely frozen but I had not noticed it. Had he not come to my assistance in time, my nose would have been frozen solid and I might have lost it. That would have been a misfortune! I would never have dared have my picture taken again! Today, it is rather painful, but new skin is forming on it, and it will soon be more beautiful than ever!"

"On Sunday, January 19h, we reached Fort Norman which lies at the confluence of the Bear and the Mackenzie rivers. It took us more than two hours to cover the ground we should have traversed in ten minutes. The juncture of the rivers had raised up hundreds of miniature mountains of ice and these were so dangerous that we had to climb over them on all fours. The sleigh was torn to shreds and so were our snowshoes.

"I went ahead and reached the gates of the abandoned fort. While waiting for the others, without the aid or the need of an orchestra, I danced in an effort to warm myself. The others soon arrived and we took possession of an old shed which was open to the wind on all sides. We built a huge fire by the light of which I was able to say the Office of the Holy Name of Jesus. I was fortunate enough to sleep a little that night. I was tired out and a two days' journey separated us from the new fort.

"The 21st of January, 1862, was the last and the hardest day of this stage of the journey. It was bitterly cold and my nose and eyes were three abundant sources which coated my shawl and face with ice. I wiped my eyes with my mitts and, as the water penetrated to my hands and froze, the mitts became useless

and my hands were numb with cold. As I pulled my weary legs along, I beat my hands against my sides in an effort to bring the blood back to my fingers but I failed. I called to one of the men and showed him where to find another pair of mitts in my sack. I put them on and a larger pair over them. Had I had to open the sack and look for the mitts myself, I should have frozen my hands. I finally succeeded in warming my hands but, while doing so, I froze my nose twice and my left cheek once. However, I noticed this in time, and there were no serious consequences."

When Bishop Grandin reached the new Fort Norman, where there was no resident Priest as yet, everybody was astounded to see him. No one dreamed that he would dare undertake such a journey in such intense cold. The postmaster, a Protestant, offered him what hospitality he could and gave him his only vacant room. "It was a very cold room but well lighted. In fact plenty of light came through the parchment which served as window panes and which was full of holes." It was in this cold room, in which he kept the Blessed Sacrament and spoke to Jesus out of the fullness of his heart, that he remained until March 8th. He was glad to be able to do some good to the Indians who came to trade at the Fort.

"Here," he wrote, "I found my young Pépin. He gladly resumed his noble offices and supplied me with plenty of wood for my fire."

On the 8th of March, the Bishop set out southward towards Fort Simpson and Providence Mission travelling with three white men who were both helpful and courteous.

We shall quote only a few extracts from the Bishop's diary: "On the second day of this trip my feet were covered with blisters and, on the morrow, they felt as if they were on fire. Rheumatism set in so that when, in the morning or after a short halt, I started to walk, I suffered such agony that, try as I did, I could not

hide it. Had we been on land, a walking stick would have been a great help, but as we were travelling on snow, I would have needed a snow-shoe for the stick, and I had no extra one.

"Finally, in the evening of March 17th, after a ten days' walk, we reached Fort Simpson. I was very tired. As a result of the brilliance of the snow and the reflection of the sun's rays, my eyes were in a pitiful state. To open them in light of any sort was agony."

It was at Simpson, during the night of March 17th, that, worn out, suffering intensely, his eyes burning and aching, this heroic apostle learned of the death of the Founder and Superior General of the Oblates. He spent the long, cold night in tears and prayer. In spite of his suffering, he said Mass on the Feast of St. Joseph for his deceased friend and father in Christ. "I am really convinced," he wrote, "that he has no need of our prayers, and I feel irresistibly drawn to pray to rather than for him."

His stay at Simpson was short. "Whether I was rested or not, I had to set out again early on the 20th. The Chief Factor at the Fort kindly put a man and four dogs at my disposal so that all that I and young Pépin had to do was to walk while the sleigh carried our baggage and provisions. The first two days of snow-shoeing from dawn to dusk were a real rest, and I greatly appreciated it as six more days were to follow before we reached Holy Heart of Mary Mission (Fort Rae).

"On the 27th, we sighted from a distance the large cross erected by Brother Kearney, the previous summer, at Providence Mission."

After two days of fruitful ministry at Fort Rae, on Big Island, he started the dangerous crossing of Great Slave Lake and surprised Father Eynard and Brother Boisramé at St. Joseph's Mission, Fort Resolution, the same evening.

It was Lent. He writes: "So far, on account of my

travelling, I have been unable to fast. I intend to start on Monday." He goes on to say: "Now, thank God, the hardest part of the trip is over. Many a time, weary unto death and almost discouraged, I have caught myself muttering: 'Oh, it is impossible! I cannot go farther!' and then I have found that one can still do a great deal even when one thinks another step impossible."

We may here insert the following incident: One day, worn out with travelling, the Bishop sat on the snow for a short rest. As soon as he did so, he saw a flock of crows hovering and circling above him, ready to devour what appeared to be only another victim of this desert of snow. "They do not wait for their victim to die," he writes, "and, had I been unable to defend myself, they would have torn me to pieces."

He was to spend more than two years in the neighbourhood of Great Slave Lake. His first long stop was among the Dog Ribs of Fort Rae. With his habitual burning zeal he ministered to them and he had the consolation of baptizing 134 of those whom he had instructed.

In order not to be too long, we shall here omit, as we have done and shall do, many interesting incidents. Two or three are, however, well worth recording. During the absence of the missionary, a Chief had baptized one of his sons, who was dying. "What name did you give him?" asked the Bishop. "Jesus Christ," was the unperturbed reply. "An excellent name indeed," said the Bishop, "in fact the greatest of all names but, since it is the name of God, you must never give it to a man again." "I gave it," said the Chief, "in order that Jesus Christ might remember the boy all the more."

The small hut, which served as the Priests' house and also as a chapel, was crowded at every service. "One day," says the Bishop, "while turning around to say 'Dominus vobiscum', I saw, right near me, a big simpleton, who had lighted his pipe at the candle on the

altar, calmly smoking. I stretched my arm apart farther than the rubrics prescribe and knocked the pipe from his mouth. Two mothers, whose babies had died without Baptism, came to me and asked me to baptize their children's bonnets." It was of the Fort Rae Indians that he wrote: "I have never seen Indians more immoral than the pagans here. As a consequence, most of them die in putrefaction."

On June 23rd, he was back at Fort Resolution. After preaching a mission there with Father Eynard, he left for Nativity Mission, on Lake Athabaska, and arrived on the 12th of July. There he met Father Clut, Brother Alexis and the newly-arrived Fathers Grouard and Petitot. On August 5th, accompanied by Father Petitot, he left for the North to visit Salt River, Fort Resolution and Big Island.

By the 14th, he had come back to the site chosen for Providence Mission where he found that Father Gascon and Brother Boisramé had been working day and night felling trees and hand-sawing them to make lumber for the church and the residence. Leaving Father Petitot here, "with the heavens for a ceiling and the earth for a floor," the Bishop took Father Gascon with him. Three days later, he reached Fort Simpson of which he wrote: "There are here Englishmen, Orkney Islanders, Norwegians, and Half-breeds, Sauteux, Maskegons, Crées, Montagnais, Slaves, Hare-skins, Sekanais, and even some Eskimos. It is really another Tower of Babel."

By the 29th, he was back at Providence and was gratified to see that the small log house and church were built. After inspecting the house, however, he wrote: "It is not fit to live in. Brother Boisramé advises me to build a better place." He decided to improve the buildings. "While the Brother and a layman worked on the roof and chimney," wrote Mgr. Grandin, "I became a mason and a plasterer without a trowel. After filling the larger crevices between the logs with twists

of grass, I made a pile of mud and, with all my strength, flung the mud at the outside walls until they were covered almost as completely as were my face and clothes. Some of the mud on the walls will soon fall; the rest will crack and, within a few weeks, the light and air will come into the house as they did before."

By September 8th they took possession of the residence although there were as yet no floors, doors, or windows. The church was completed in time for All Saints Day and it was tastefully decorated by Father Petitot who was an accomplished artist. Work was temporarily stopped in January while the Bishop preached the annual Retreat to Father Petitot and Brother Boisramé.

The Bishop's two companions, tired of eating dried fish day after day, lost their appetite and needed fresh meat. They asked and received permission to kill an aged dog whose days of usefulness were past. The Bishop notes: "They had roast dog, fried dog and dog stew for many a day." The Bishop refrained from partaking of these savory dishes. "On a certain Feast Day," the Bishop tells us, "the menu consisted of an ancient crow (which the dogs had refused to eat) served with an exquisite sauce."

It was intended that Providence Mission should become Bishop Faraud's See. Father Petitot and Brother Boisramé went back to Great Slave Lake, early in December (1862), while, with young Pépin, and two "very exacting and lazy Indians", Bishop Grandin spent eight long months at Providence. Here, besides ministering to the Indians, he tried his hand at many trades. "Alone I used to fell the trees," he writes, "cut them into logs and load them on a sleigh. Then young Pépin had the dogs haul them to my lazy Indians who leisurely sawed them into planks. While the boy prepared my supper, I said my office and made my evening meditation. After supper I taught catechism and school to the Indians. After young Pépin and a



four-year-old orphan had gone to rest, I used to read until midnight and thus, during that winter, I was able to review moral and dogmatic theology from beginning to end."

## CHAPTER NINE

I HAVE TOILED HARDER.... SO OFTEN LOOKED DEATH IN THE FACE.... I HAVE SPENT A NIGHT AND A DAY AS A CASTAWAY AT SEA.

—II. Cor. XI. 23-26

Bishop Grandin remained at Providence Mission, except for short missionary trips, until June 26, 1864. Instead of following him through the pages of his diary, which he addressed to the Very Rev. Father Fabre, second Superior General of the Oblates, we shall content ourselves with a few excerpts.

"I would die happy," he wrote, "could I but see one holy Priest chosen from the Indians of this Vicariate. The difficulties which militate against this are many, and come chiefly from the parents." (He lived to see this wish twice granted.) Again he writes from Providence Mission: "I have to wash and mend not only my own linen clothes but also those of my young Indian pupils. As a cobbler, I am really making progress. And so it happens that whether I am teaching Montagnais to Father Petitot or their lessons to the young Indians, I have always a needle in one hand and a boot, a moccasin or a piece of cloth in the other."

On the 19th of March (1863), he sent Father Petitot to Fort Resolution. Learning that Brother Boisramé was ill and unable to do the work assigned to him, the Bishop wrote to him asking him to come to Providence Mission to help him, the Bishop, dig and plant a garden.

"From March 20th," writes the Bishop, "I hauled wood on a dog sleigh. As the snow was melting during

the day, I had to do this work at night. I have asked so often for Brothers that I fear the Superior General will think me most importunate.

"As soon as most of the frost was out of the ground, I started to dig up the garden and I have been at it ever since. Except for the time I took for my spiritual exercises and to teach catechism, I have been digging from daylight until dark. As I had two shovels, I got an Indian to help me, but he did very little work. A month later, I was worn out. My shovels and pick, however, were worse off: they were broken. I planted nine bushels of potatoes and of grain." A severe frost came and not a potato or an ear of grain was harvested. For all his work, the Bishop had nothing except the merit of the labour which he had offered to God, and that of resignation to the divine Will.

He had waited and waited for the Indians to come to a mission he was to preach to them. "It seemed to me," he wrote, "that, with a little good will, they could have come. I waited patiently until the end of May and then I set out to seek my lost sheep. Within a few hours I was several miles from the Mission as we were travelling down stream and the current was very strong. There I came across quite a numerous band of Indians on their way to the Mission. An hour later, we came across an even more numerous band camped near a bay. They told me that they had not come to the Mission because they feared that they might catch no fish there. However, they said, they would come to see me soon.

"I went on to the last camp praying that God, through the intercession of His most Holy Mother, would put on my lips words that would draw them out of their apathy. I was well received and they made all sorts of excuses for not coming sooner. I had them sing one of our most stirring mission hymns and then I spoke somewhat as follows: 'You say that you love me. Why, then, do you not come to see me? I love

you and that is why I left my own beautiful country to live with you. Nine years ago today I left my aged, white-haired father, I left him although his heart bled and mine bled too, and all those who loved me wept to see me go. But when I wrote to my father and my friends and told them that the Indians of Athabaska and of Ile à la Crosse listened to me and lived the life that takes us to heaven, my father and my friends were glad. Then I heard that you did not know how to go to heaven. So, I left my good Indians to come to show you how to go to heaven. I came to you because you begged me to come. In order to remain with you I suffered much. Look at my hands! What do those blisters and calouses tell you? The white men will soon come here to take your furs, and when they go, I will have them take a letter to my old father. What can I now tell him to make his lonesome heart happy? If I tell him that you do not care for religion and that you are wicked, it will make him die. And what excuse will you give to God when He judges you? Will you say that you did not know better? He will say: 'I sent my Priest to tell you and you did not listen'.

"You say that I am no good because I do not give you tobacco as others do. Suppose I give you all the tobacco that you want and that you smoke it all and that then you die and burn with the Evil Spirit, will you then be happy? If you want to do that, do it—but do not blame me.'

"An old man arose and spoke for all: 'It is true that we have said foolish things. That is because we have little sense. Our hearts are not as wicked as our words. Those of us who have seen the Priest have seen him only for a short time. Other white men give us tobacco when we see them and that is what makes us say bad things about you. We will now go to see you at your place and we will do what you say'.

"I did not wait for them but immediately got into

my canoe. We had great difficulty ascending the river. The ice had again formed on the lake, our canoe was smashed, and my most reverend Lordship got a most irreverent ducking and had to get back to the house through mud, bushes and thorns.

"Among those who come to all services is a simpleton. His assiduity and attentiveness are edifying. Every time I preach he stares at me and never takes his eyes from mine. He seems to think that I am preaching for him alone, and he feels obliged to approve of all I say. He continually interrupts me with: 'You are right,' or 'That is a fact!' The other day he came in quivering with rage. An old woman had grossly insulted him and he wanted my permission to thrash her to within an inch of her life. The permission was refused and he said: 'It is mighty lucky for her that I respect you, Bishop!'

"Father Eynard," continues the diary, "paid me a very welcome visit on July 13th. His coming enabled me to receive absolution of all my lack of patience; I had been unable to go to confession since March."

August 18th brought Father Grouard (still an Oblate Novice) and Brother Alexis. On the same day, the Bishop and Father Grouard went to preach a mission at Fort Simpson while Father Eynard and the Brother remained at Providence. Ten days later, the Bishop was back, but Father Grouard did not return until October 10th, as he had gone to minister to the Indians at Liard. The Bishop, Father Grouard and Brother Alexis formed the Community at Providence during the winter 1863-1864.

Concerning their poverty, the Bishop writes: "In our palace, we have neither chairs nor beds,—or rather, we have a very large bed: the entire attic floor. We have no tools with which to work, and no paper on which to write. I have no clothes other than those which I am wearing and no watch or clock. We eat when we are hungry and the time of our meditations

is measured by our fervour or rather by mine. Our greatest trouble is to know when to rise in the morning. If the Brother can see the stars, we get up almost on time. But sometimes there are no stars to be seen. And, even when the stars are out, one has first to awaken to see them and also to go outside. This is no easy matter for the Brother as he has to climb down from the attic on a rickety ladder. However, we always manage to rise between two and six a.m.

To make up for this inconvenience, our table is excellent. We have two cows, one of which gives milk, and so now we have butter. What is more surprising is that we have bread and what is still even more surprising is that this bread does not contain a particle of flour. It is made of fish roe. It is not quite as palatable as it looks but we enjoy it as we have nothing better."

Sixty years later, Bishop Grouard, Vicar Apostolic of Athabaska, said of that winter at Providence: "We were never so happy in all our lives; you should have seen us climbing up our ladder made of rope ends, and then crawling on all fours into our place, perhaps one over the other. Sometimes a foot or leg went very far down through the floor. Planks were apt to move a bit. They were not nailed down for the very good reason that we had no nails. We laughed at all such incidents. What could be more amusing? In those days we ate dog, we ate crow, we ate other unsavory dishes, and sometimes we ate nothing at all; but I assure you not one of us would have changed places with the Shah of Persia."

November 21st, 1863, was a Feast Day at the Mission as Father Grouard took vows as an Oblate on that day. "This morning," writes the Bishop, "in honour of the occasion, I put on my purple cassock (a thing I rarely do) and we lighted two candles, instead of the usual one, for Mass. Thanks to Brother Alexis, we had a special breakfast."

About two weeks later, accompanied by young Jean Baptiste Pépin, two Hudson Bay Company employees and an Indian, the Bishop set out on snowshoes for St. Joseph's Mission on Great Slave Lake. The men went first and the Bishop and the boy followed. Although the Bishop had severely injured his foot ("so as almost to tear off the nail of the great toe") all went well until the evening of the 14th. Suddenly the situation changed.

"And now," writes the Bishop, "we had to traverse countless large snow-drifts. After walking for a long time and always managing to knock my sore toe against blocks of ice, I felt tired and decided to ride on the sleigh. I could not see the men ahead of us but we were only about a mile from our destination, so that, had it not been snowing heavily, we could easily have seen the Mission. Then suddenly, a violent wind sprang up. It swept up the snow that lay on the ice and mingled it with that which fell in great abundance so that we could not see a yard ahead. The track left by our companions was obliterated. Guiding ourselves by the wind we trudged on towards the Mission as we thought. But nothing varies like the wind, and, without our noticing it, the wind changed directions. We shouted, we listened, but the storm was all we heard.

"Hoping that the dogs' instinct would guide them, we gave them free rein. They plodded on and on but we could see nothing but the ice immediately around us. Had the violent wind left any ice blocks on the lake, we could have sheltered ourselves from the piercing wind during the night and thus have escaped the danger of freezing to death but we were on glare ice. As soon as the snow fell, the wind swept it away, and so we could not find or make a snow bank to protect ourselves.

"Realizing that the more we walked the more we exposed ourselves to death, we decided to camp on the ice. We unharnessed the dogs as quickly as possible

and this was dangerous because, to untie all the knots, we had to take off our mitts. Each of us worked in turn while the other beat his hands against his sides and stamped his feet in an effort to bring back some warmth. We then tried to shelter ourselves from the bitter, ice-cold, piercing wind by throwing up a shelter composed of our sleigh, the dogs, our snowshoes and some blankets.

Seated on the ice with my back to the upturned sleigh and the young boy on my lap, I wrapped the remaining blankets around us but again and again they were blown off by the wind and, with the boy pressing himself close to me for warmth, he and I prepared for death. After a long silence, the boy betrayed his thoughts; he asked me to hear his confession. I put a caribou hide around him, sat on the sleigh, and complied with his request.

"We soon realized that the cold was getting the better of us. We got up and, each keeping a blanket on, we hurriedly tied the other blankets to the sleigh and again started to walk so as to flee from the clutch of death.

"We had eaten very little for dinner as, being within so short a distance of our destination, our provisions were exhausted, but I felt no need of food. Even the intense pain in my foot seemed to have disappeared.

"We walked on for a long time and, when we were not too cold, stopped now and then to rest. Then, in spite of his efforts and mine, the boy began to fall asleep. We both knew what that meant and so, to save his life, we decided to camp again.

"By God's mercy I found a thick layer of snow. Hastily, with my snowshoes, I dug a hole in it, spread out the blankets and put the poor child to bed. Then, to prevent the blankets from being blown away, I placed a dog on each corner and covered all with snow. When this was done, to keep the boy warm, I lay close to him but I needed someone to cover me up with snow as I

had covered him. In spite of all my precautions, the biting wind got at us.

"Having worked strenuously to prepare our shelter, I was now very warm, and this warmth melted the snow in and on my clothing. The ice-cold blast then froze the melted snow, and I had nowhere to put my hands to keep them from freezing. The boy was in the same predicament.

"We lay there but neither of us could or dared sleep. We spent the long night hours moving, turning, rolling, rubbing ourselves and blowing on our hands and fingers in an effort to stave off death. Finally, I could stand it no longer, and got up to run around and to beat my hands against my body.

"Was it a mirage? Was it land I saw? I cried out to the boy. He got up. It was land! We hastened to the place which we saw because there we could build a fire. I felt that my heel was freezing; the boy felt the same sensation in both heels. Neither of us could put on our snowshoes.

"After a long walk we reached land. It was hard to find wood and harder still, when we had found some to light a fire. We had no food but we did have a little tea and we were just about to drink a cup of hot tea when we saw two sleighs on the lake. We laughed, we cried, we shouted, we danced,—we were saved! The sleighs belonged to the boy's father and uncle who had set out at dawn to search for us or, as they thought, for our bodies.

"We were on the island on which St. Joseph's Mission is situated and within fifteen minutes' walk of the Priests' house.

"As I entered the chapel, Father Petitot was saying Mass for the repose of my soul. When he saw me, his emotion got the better of him and he could hardly finish the Holy Sacrifice. After I had offered up Mass, we talked and we wept, and we spent the rest of the day celebrating the return of the dead."



In his "Life of Bishop Grandin", Father Jonquet adds: "In the freezing horror of his position, in an effort to keep up his young companion's courage, Bishop Grandin had tried to sing. The words stuck in his throat and the tears froze as they dropped from his eyes."

Advised by the Hudson Bay employees that the Bishop and Jean Baptiste were on the lake, Fathers Gascon and Petitot had done everything possible to save them. They had shoutéd, set up burning torches, lighted huge fires and had fired their rifles, but the snow fell so thickly and the wind howled so loudly that all their efforts were in vain.

The two Priests insisted that the Bishop remain with them until after Christmas and he did so. He then set out for Providence Mission but, in spite of all the precautions taken, this trip closely resembled the one we have just described: The party became lost, the guide wanted to turn back, provisions ran out and one of the dogs had to be eaten to stave off starvation. In the bitter cold, the wind piercing him, the Bishop knelt on the bare ice as, cross in hand, he renewed his Oblate vows. It was New Year's Day, the anniversary of the day on which he had been professed! Five days later, ill and worn out, he reached the Mission.

Two months later, he went to Fort Simpson, and a month after that he was back at Providence.

There was a great deal of work to be done in that winter of 1863-64. With the aid of a saw, a hatchet, and some wooden pegs, the convent-orphanage had to be built for the Grey Nuns. Mgr. Grouard tells us how the work went on: "Mgr. Grandin, on one of the islands, felled the trees. Then, with the help of the dogs, he brought them to us over the frozen Mackenzie. Brother Alexis and I sawed them into planks. The next thing was to make them into a house, and to this work we all lent a hand, being helped by some of the men of the Company. When this new convent was finished, we, the builders, were ourselves amazed,—to

say nothing of the Indians. A house with an upper storey! Was such a thing ever seen in the Far North? The Indians were quite frightened by the outer staircase. After much reflection, they climbed down in a sitting posture. The unusual height made them giddy. When they saw us walking up and down stairs, they were lost in admiration at the cleverness of the Palefaces."

On June 25th, 1864, just as he was about to go to Ile à la Crosse, he learned that Father Grollier had died three weeks before. "After spending the night in tears and in prayers and in making plans," writes the Bishop, "I started for Ile à la Crosse at 4 a.m., my heart full of grief."

It was summer and so he travelled by boat with all those fatiguing portages ahead of him. At Big Island he baptized fifteen Indians and at Fort Resolution he confirmed as many. A few days later, after saying Mass at Beaulieu's house, he spent the night in view of Nativity Mission. In order to have more time with the Bishop, the Fathers had come from the Mission to see him and they spent the night exchanging news and making plans.

At Portage la Loche, he learned that Father Vanderberghe, personal representative of the Oblate Superior General, was waiting for him some miles away on the lake shore. He borrowed a horse and by midnight had met Father Vanderberghe. Bishop Grandin writes: "This excellent Priest was my Novice Master and, so, I have always considered him as a father. How happy I am to see him. He is so kind and he has only to say a few words to make my cares and worries vanish."

While waiting for the boat to leave, the Bishop made use of his time to instruct the Indians and to hear their confessions. When the boat was ready, accompanied by the Very Reverend Father Vanderberghe, canonical visitor of the Oblate Missions, after a truly heroic trip which had lasted more than three years, during which time he had covered hundreds of painful miles,

had visited the most distant posts of the Vicariate, and had preached mission after mission (hardly any of which he had finished without coughing up blood), this zealous apostle and Bishop set out for Ile à la Crosse which he reached early in August, 1864.

The courage he showed in this long voyage, the heroism, the burning zeal for the extension of Christ's Kingdom, make us cry out with the celebrated French journalist, Louis Veuillot: "What a splendid Bishop you have there in North America! He has shown me the truth of the saying that ice burns." Father Duchaussois says: "Bishop Grandin always considered this heroic journey as the culminating point of his apostolate among the Indians. It was from the sufferings and the consolations experienced in that vast desert of snow and ice, inhabited by the Montagnais and the Hareskins, the Dog-ribs, and the Slaves, that he used to choose the most relished stories which he told in the conferences which he was asked to give in so many colleges, institutions, churches, and cathedrals of his native land."

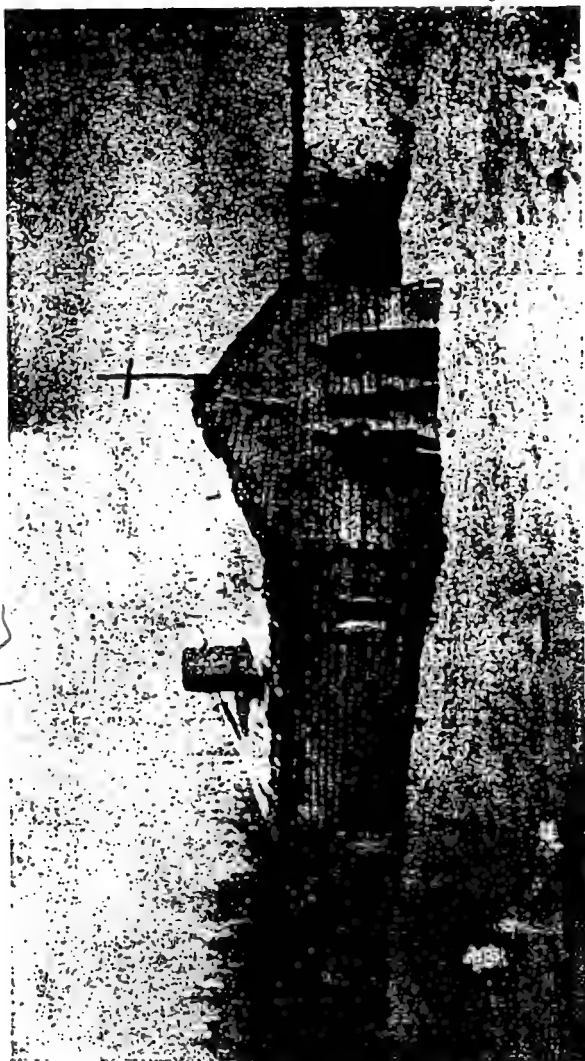
The excerpts we have gleaned from his diary concerning this trip are sufficient to give an idea of what his many other apostolic journeys were. We shall therefore not recount these journeys in detail but we shall quote from his diary episodes equally as beautiful, interesting, and edifying.

## CHAPTER TEN

THE LORD GAVE, AND THE LORD HATH TAKEN AWAY.....  
BLESSED IS THE NAME OF THE LORD.

—Job. I. 21

No sooner had Bishop Grandin reached Ile à la Crosse than he was visited by Bishop Taché. After they had cordially greeted each other, they discussed the interests of the vast diocese of St. Boniface during the evenings after they had spent the days in instructing



*Log cabin at Beaver Lake. Father W. Comiri, O.M.I. and Brother Barassé, O.M.I.*

the Indians, hearing confessions, and preaching. They also decided to turn over to the Sisters the Priests' house at Ile à la Crosse after enlarging it, and to put up another residence for the missionaries.

Late one night there was a loud knocking at the door. Bishop Taché, the first to hear it, hurriedly dressed, climbed down from the attic, and opened the door. "I don't want to see you," said the Indian who had done the knocking, "I want Bishop Grandin." "What do you want him for?" "I have a toothache and I cannot sleep; I want him to sing for me." "Here," said the Bishop, giving the man a turnip which he happened to see, "eat that; forget your toothache and let us sleep in peace."

Utterly worn out by what he had gone through during the past three years, Bishop Grandin was little more than a convalescent during the winter of 1864-1865 and had frequently to take to his bed. By spring he had recovered sufficiently to construct, through swamp and forest, a road which connected his missions with the important centres of Carlton and St. Boniface and which facilitated the bringing up of supplies to the missionaries. With the help of the Priest and the two Brothers who lived with him at Ile à la Crosse, he built a new house for the missionaries there. He also undertook several long journeys to the bedsides of the dying Indians during this time, and made a trip to St. Boniface to buy horses, wagons, cooking utensils, stoves and chickens. "I even bought cats," he tells us.

In October (1866) he made a very painful trip to St. Peter's Mission situated at the northern extremity of Lake Caribou. When he finally got there, Fathers Moulin and Gasté found him worn out and famished: he had travelled two days without a bite to eat. The Fathers themselves had very little food but he shared their poverty and worked with them until January the 30th of the following year. Their hut was miserable and the surrounding country desolate but there were

souls there to save. Speaking of this visit, Brother Memoriam, F. S. C., Rector of St. Joseph's University College, Edmonton, says: "Having returned then from the northern missions to Saint Jean-Baptiste, the Bishop of Satala had every reason to take a well-deserved rest. But rest, in the ordinary sense of that word, is not for souls of the Grandin mould. He had heard that the Priests of Lake Caribou had much to contend with. To them, therefore, he wends his way, bearing with him words of consolation and encouragement. His trip thither had not been an easy one. He arrived among them worn out with hunger and fatigue. To him, that was of little moment. Their troubles and privations were all that mattered. His report to the Superior General of his visitation fully reveals his compassion for his suffering Oblate brothers. The four hardest months of the winter of 1866-67, with their hardships, will ever be associated in the minds of his biographers with this mission of brotherly love."

During the return journey the Cree guide declared that he was ill and could walk no farther. The Bishop took the man's place and had him lie in the sleigh. This was too much for the faithful young Pépin who said: "You pay him to work and he makes you let him ride. You are far more ill than he." The boy then told the guide just what he thought of him, and he did so in such forceful language that the sick man was immediately restored to health and the party arrived at Ile à la Crosse a few days later.

One evening, while the Bishop and his companions were at supper in the Sisters' residence, a boy rushed in shouting: "Your house is on fire!" All hurried towards the house, which Brother Bowes had just enlarged, but it was too late.

"We tried to get in," writes the Bishop, "but as soon as we opened the door, the flames shot out and drove us back. I managed to get to the chapel somehow, seized the Tabernacle in my arms and saved the

Blessed Sacrament. 'Save the powder,' cried one of the Fathers. We had some powder, shot, and dry-goods on hand as it is with these and not with money, that we buy what we need and pay our employees. We broke the windows of the powder magazines but the suffocating smoke prevented us from entering. All that we could do then was to flee for our lives. I saw the Brother, who was in charge of the boys, throwing their burning blankets out of a dormitory window. I ordered him to leave the building. He had hardly done so when the floor caved in.

"In order not to be killed when the powder exploded, we fled to a safe distance, shivering in the bitter cold, the Sisters, the children, the Indians, and we stood on the frozen lake helplessly watching the destruction of the house and the school which had cost us so much and upon which we had founded such high hopes. Suddenly the wooden fence between the house and the church caught fire. We rushed to save the church and just then there was a terrific explosion from the powder magazine and a huge shower of sparks and burning material flew in all directions. God then took pity on us. The wind, which had been driving the flames towards the church, suddenly changed and drove them towards the lake. The church was saved.

"By nine o'clock that evening, all was over, or, I should say, all was destroyed. We had no house left and one of the Fathers and two of the Brothers were seriously ill. And then there were nineteen small boys who shared our home. We had no blankets left and it was bitterly cold. The intense heat of the fire had melted the snow so that our feet were soaking wet and cold and not one of us could change his boots or stockings. I had no breviary, no ritual, nothing—not even a handkerchief with which to dry the tears which I could not refrain from shedding. All our books, our fishing nets, everything we had was destroyed. The poor Indians lost the trunks in which they stored at the

Mission their very best clothes—the clothes they used to wear only on Holy Communion days.”

While the ruins were still smoking, Bishop Grandin gathered all together in the church and (such was his spirit of faith) broke out into that hymn of praise and thanksgiving: “Te Deum Laudamus”—“O God, we praise Thee”. Not a life had been lost; not a person injured. In his brief exhortation, he said: “My dear children, when we have the happiness of having the gift of faith, we can easily bow our heads in submission to God’s Holy Will. Every trial should bring us closer to Our Lord.”

In his account of the fire, Bishop Grandin hurriedly passes over one incident. Brother Memorjam stresses it. “Right while the fire was at its worst, the good Bishop prayed, and, behold the wind, which had threatened to carry the destructive element to the adjoining church and convent, suddenly veered and these precious buildings were saved.”

The disaster was a heavy blow to the Bishop. He decided to travel over the eight hundred miles of snow, which separated him from St. Boniface, in order not only to buy and beg what was absolutely necessary but also to unburden his sorrow-laden heart into that of his intimate friend and counsellor, Bishop Taché.

At St. Boniface he found awaiting him a letter from the Superior General of the Oblates summoning him to a General Chapter of the Congregation. Among other things the Superior General said: “When you take into consideration what you have to suffer, how dare you even think of keeping the special fasts prescribed by the Oblate Rule? Be sure to come to the Chapter. You will be able to restore your shattered health and we can go into those matters which concern your Missions—I should have said our Missions, because I love them.”

In compliance with the Superior General’s orders, Bishop Taché and Bishop Grandin went to Ottawa,



where they were joined by Bishop Guigues, also an Oblate, and the three sailed from Quebec May 25th.

Bishop Taché writes: "Utterly worn out by what he went through last winter and his forty-four day journey on foot to St. Boniface, after the disastrous fire at Ile à la Crosse, Bishop Grandin suffered exceedingly while crossing the ocean. The sea, quite calm for the rest of us, was cruel to him. He did not once leave his bed."

Landing at Liverpool, June 5th, the three Bishops were with the Superior General, three days later, in Paris.

As the Chapter was not to begin for some time, they went to Rome to be present at the festivities held in connection with the 18th centenary of the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul. They were granted a private audience by the Pope and then returned to Autun, France, on the eve of the opening of the General Chapter.

At this meeting Bishop Taché requested that Bishop Grandin be made religious Superior of all the Oblates in the vast diocese of St. Boniface and that he be given the title of Vicar of Missions. The request was granted.

After the General Chapter was over, Bishop Taché made a short visit to Belgium and then left for Canada while his Coadjutor remained in Europe in order to get recruits and financial aid for the Missions. Bishop Grandin spent several months in France visiting diocese after diocese, preaching, giving conferences, begging. The simplicity with which he spoke, his sincerity, his burning zeal and love for God made a deep impression in cathedrals, churches, seminaries. Everyone wanted to see and to hear this man of God. The salons of society opened their doors to him. Louis Veillot, the great lay champion of Catholicism in France, came again and again to visit and to listen to him. To speak to Veillot was to speak to France because Veillot was then the most outstanding journalist in Paris.

Two days after he had met Bishop Grandin, Veillot

devoted a long article to him in his newspaper, the "Universe". From this article we quote the following:

"This Missionary Bishop, half-smiling and yet so deadly in earnest, spoke something like this: 'I frankly admit that we live habitually in poverty similar to that in which the Blessed Benedict Labre chose to live. I really believe that, sometimes, we are forced to surpass him in this matter. We sleep on the bare floor, on the ground, or in the snow and we have forgotten the taste of bread. Our food is usually dried or frozen fish or meat and our drink is generally water. When travelling, we eat pemmican. This is dried meat, pulverized, cooked in grease and allowed to harden. For fifteen years I have tried to get used to it but I have failed.

'We are often obliged to sleep on a bed of ice under a blanket of snow. On these occasions, our coarse, heavy garments, made of the skins of wild animals, cannot keep us warm enough to sleep. So as not to freeze, we have not only our guides but even our dogs share our bed. As a result of this, I have never returned from a journey without being covered with vermin.

'Like my fellow missionaries, I have become a carpenter, a mason, a fisherman, a tailor, a cobbler, a doctor, and a school teacher. I will not disguise the fact that I feel I should enjoy myself here in France. Many a time I have caught myself longing for a bowl of soup such as you make here at home. But I know for what purpose God made me and why He sent me to the Missions. Into the darkness, I bring light; into that land of ice, I bring love; into that death I bring life. To the Indians I bring gifts from Christ the King. I bring them the sacraments of Baptism. Penance, Marriage; I bring them the Bread of Angels; I bring them the strength they need to live a good life; I bring them the grace of a happy death. I bring a blessing to the cradle and a prayer to the grave. I bring them faith, truth, consolation, hope and love.

'Word comes that an Indian is dying. I take my canoe or my snowshoes, travel for days, crawl into a tent, kneel by the dying Indian's side as he lies on the ground and, through God's mercy, usher another soul into Heaven.

'There is no poetry in these missions; there is only prose—cold, dull, horrible prose. If you wish to join us in these Missions (and may God grant that some will!), I cannot promise you martyrdom, but I do promise you fatigue without respite, snow and ice without bounds, sleepless nights of sorrow and toil, a scorching sun and biting cold. I promise you, also, vermin. In spite of this I have found men and women for these Missions. Yes, there are Sisters there, and, had I the means to support them, I could have as many as we need.'

"That," concludes Veuillot, "is more or less what the Bishop said to us. As we listened to him, this thought came to our minds: the Catholic Church has the secret of making heroes and, thank God, these heroes will not easily be supplanted by the men whom heresy makes."

Bishop Grandin spent a short time at home where he had the happiness of seeing and blessing his venerable father. Then, at Bishop Taché's urgent request, he hastened to Rome to do what he could in support of the Canadian Hierarchy's plan to have the diocese of St. Boniface divided and to have a Bishopric established at St. Albert—a Bishopric that was twice the size of France.

In Rome Pius IX granted Bishop Grandin a private audience during which the latter asked that his Priests be allowed to keep the Blessed Sacrament in their poor Missions without the rubrical Sanctuary lamp. He pointed out that they could not afford oil and that, even if they could, it would freeze.

"I cannot grant such a permission," replied the Pope, "except in times of persecution."

"O Holy Father," cried the Bishop, "we are not

persecuted, it is true, but we have so much to suffer. At times we cannot afford more than one candle for Mass. If you take the good God from us, what will become of us?"

Deeply moved, the Pope replied: "I understand. Keep the Blessed Sacrament! My dear Bishop, in your life of sacrifice and privation, you have all the merits of martyrdom without any of its glory."

As a mark of special affection, the Sovereign Pontiff gave Bishop Grandin a golden chalice and ciborium. The fatherly kindness with which the Pope treated him was, to the sensitive heart of the Bishop, a source of great joy and courage.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

WE DESIRED NOTHING BETTER THAN TO OFFER YOU OUR OWN LIVES.... IT IS WITHIN YOUR KNOWLEDGE THAT WE TREATED EVERYONE OF YOU AS A FATHER TREATS HIS CHILDREN, ENCOURAGING YOU, COMFORTING YOU.

—I Thess. II, 8-12

Bishop Grandin's campaign in France was very successful. He sailed from Brest on April 20th, accompanied by Fathers or Scholastic Brothers Dupin, Doucet, Fourmond and Blanchet and by Lay Brothers Némot and Gérante, as well as by Brother Guillet and two other young men who had not yet started their novitiate. He brought many cases of gifts of every description for his Priests and for the Indians.

The caravan of missionaries picked up more recruits and additional supplies in Quebec and reached St. Boniface towards the middle of July. After spending a few days with Bishop Taché, the band of missionaries set out again and reached Carlton, on the Saskatchewan, which had as yet no bridges, and of which the crossing was no easy matter. However, practically everybody and all the baggage had traversed the river and the Bishop

was about to follow when a serious accident occurred. Bishop Grandin thus described the incident: "An ox had crossed the river and had just begun to climb the bank when he suddenly turned and, with a cartful of goods, rushed madly down the slope and plunged into the river. In the swift current he struggled and kicked and finally freed himself of the wagon and saved his life, but the wagon and all it contained went to the bottom. The Brothers managed to fish out a case and my portable chapel about a mile down stream, but everything else was lost. Among the things carried away by the current was a trunk in which I had packed the most precious gifts I had received. In it were the golden chalice and the ciborium given to me by the Pope, another beautiful chalice and several costly sets of episcopal and sacerdotal vestments. In that ill-fated trunk were all my personal clothing and that of others and several valuable documents. In that same accident we lost many valuable tools and implements which would have been of great use to us. However, it was God's holy Will. In spite of prolonged efforts, nothing was recovered."

While the others journeyed westward, Bishop Grandin directed his steps to Ile à la Crosse where he found the missionaries and about twenty-five young Indian boys lodged in a miserable shed. Thanks to the alms which he had received in France, the Bishop was able to make their lot less uncomfortable. He spent a month with them and then set out for St. Albert, which he reached on the 25th of October, 1868.

Seven years before this, Bishop Taché and Father Albert Lacombe had set out from Lake St. Anne to choose a site on which to establish a Mission from which a Priest could attend the small chapel recently built at Edmonton. After travelling about forty miles, they came to a small hill overlooking the Sturgeon River about nine miles northwest of Edmonton. The site was ideal. "The Mission will be here," said Bishop Taché

to Father Lacombe, "and, in honour of your patron Saint, it will be called St. Albert's Mission!" Bishop Grandin spent four months at St. Albert in order to establish a Scholasticate and Novitiate. He then started on a tour of his Missions. As the climate was less severe than in the extreme North, he was able to travel in a sleigh drawn by horses.

When he reached Lake La Biche, he found the Fathers' house and convent gaily decked out in flags and banners. The Indians were not to be outdone; every log cabin flew, if not a flag, a piece of red cloth, or at least a colored handkerchief. As soon as the Bishop's sleigh appeared, the Indians, headed by Father Rémas, raised their rifles and fired volley after volley. As the Chronicler notes, "they certainly did not spare powder." As soon as the Bishop arrived, the firing ceased and all shook hands with him. He was delighted to find that this Mission, which had cost so much work and suffering, was now doing splendidly.

The rest of the journey was not so pleasant. Three primitive, heavily-laden Red River carts, almost impassable roads, and five half-wild horses caused plenty of trouble. Time and again, the Bishop and Father Rémas had literally to put their shoulders to the wheel and to push the bogged-down carts with all their strength while their feet slipped in the deep mud and melting snow. And this continued until April 15th.

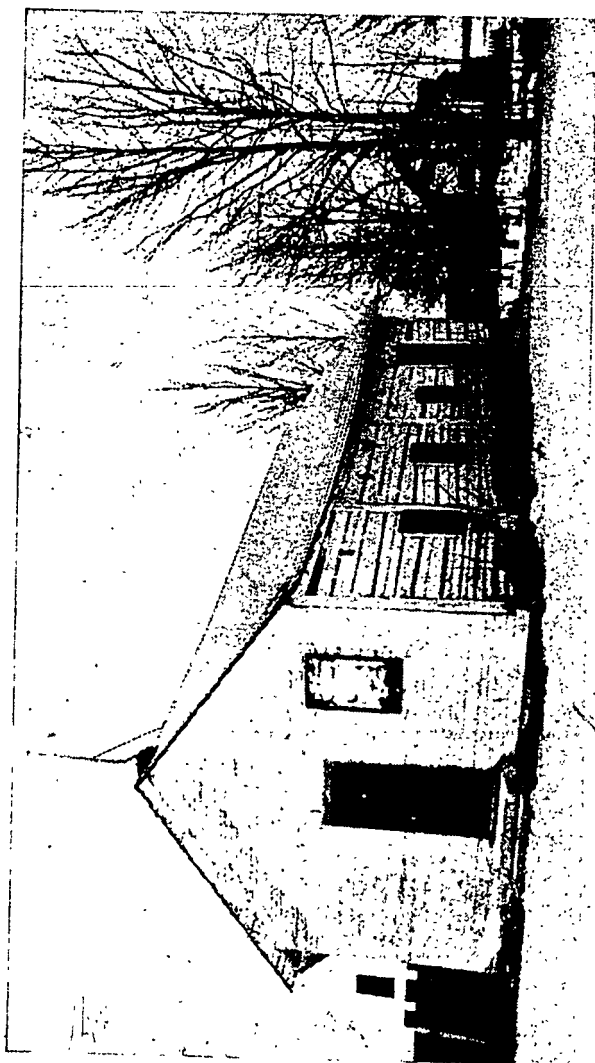
While on the way to Ile à la Crosse, the caravan was attacked by pagan Indians who had to be bribed with tobacco and tea to prevent them from stealing everything. It was in his report on this journey that Bishop Grandin wrote: "These Indians were pagans. Ah, there are many pagans, simply because we lack missionaries to convert them. There is, alas, no lack of fur-traders, and many of these scandalize our Indians whose bodies and souls are ruined with their liquor. Not a wolf's tail is lost in these boundless prairies because there is always someone to salvage it, but for immortal souls, for souls

created to the likeness of God and redeemed by the Blood of Christ, we cannot find sufficient missionaries. I will say no more. Were I to say all that I feel, I fear that I should go too far."

He reached Ile à la Crosse by boat on the eve of Pentecost. "Today, June 19th," he writes, "we are all very happy. Bishop Faraud and his auxiliary, Bishop Clut (consecrated August 15th, 1867), arrived unexpectedly at midnight." The three Bishops discussed their problems and made their plans. Bishop Clut then left to attend the Vatican Council while the two others spent the rest of the year visiting their flocks and preaching missions.

During this year, Bishop Grandin spent a short time at St. Albert, his headquarters. The Mission buildings had been erected on a small hill at the foot of which were some forty houses of Half-breeds. Foreseeing that these people and the Indians would soon have to depend on agriculture for a living, the Oblates had established an experimental farm at this Mission where they taught and encouraged the people of St. Albert to grow their own vegetables and grain and to raise their own cattle.

The little chapel, in which these people heard Mass, was very low. The Bishop informs us that he could not wear his mitre unless he took care to stand between the rafters. He adds that the rain, the snow and the wind entered at will. As for his "palace", it was nothing but a one-storey shed, about sixty feet long by fifteen feet wide. Writing to relatives, one of the missionaries thus describes the "palace": "There are eight of us living in it and we are always bumping into one another. Seven of us share one room which serves as a dormitory, parlour, library, carpenter's shop, sewing room, etc. Our beds consist of the hides of wild animals, stretched on the floor, and two blankets. Mattresses and sheets are unheard of luxuries. It is only on the greater Feast days that we have bread and, even then,



*First Log Cathedral at St. Albert, built in 1862*



we have very little. However, we have a delicacy unknown to you. It is called pemmican. It is a concoction of meat which, after being pulverized and boiled in grease, is allowed to dry in a leather sack for a year. It is then chopped with an axe and has all the delicious flavor of a candle. Besides this we have meat which has been dried in the sun and which is almost as tender as leather. Those of us who have good teeth are generally able to masticate it. We really have tea—it is rather anemic—but we cannot afford sugar. Do not imagine, however, that we are starving. To tell the truth, I have begun to grow so stout that I have been nicknamed the 'Canon'."

Even though the missionaries were over-burdened with work and had to undergo many privations, they were nevertheless happy, especially when chance brought them together. Father Leduc writes: "We shall never forget with what humility Father André, who had been chosen to preach our annual retreat, begged his Lordship to allow him to kiss our feet before the opening sermon. The retreat closed with pontifical High Mass during which Father Fourmond and two Brothers took vows as Oblates. That day", continues Father Leduc, "we were twelve Oblates together, all happy and feeling that such days of spiritual joy and of Oblate charity more than made up for the sufferings and hardships inseparable from the life of a missionary in this wild country."

After taking vows, Father Fourmond was named Superior and professor of two students in theology, the future Fathers Doucet and Blanchet, and went to live with them at Lake St. Anne.

Before he left, he took part in a "Temperance Day" celebration at St. Albert. An altar, as imposingly decorated as possible, was set up at the foot of a huge cross which Father Lacombe had erected in the preceding spring (1869). Speaking to a large and attentive audience, Father André warmly congratulated the Indians

and Half-breeds who had remained faithful to their pledge and he quite as warmly excoriated those who had drunk or supplied liquor. "Many were seen humbly to bow their head during the sermon," notes the St. Albert Chronicle.

The Priests and Brothers, who remained at St. Albert, were kept busy. They had already started to build a church large enough to seat about four hundred people. They had to enlarge the convent-hospital so as to accommodate more children and more patients and to put up a store-house and a blacksmith shop.

Most of the missionaries, however, were busy among the Indians of whom we shall now speak. Two great Indian nations, the Crees and the Blackfeet, almost constantly at war with each other, lived within Bishop Grandin's jurisdiction. The Crees were subdivided into the Prairie Crees and the Wood Crees. The latter were by far the better of the two, and three hundred of them had been converted. As for the Prairie Crees, until quite recently no sustained effort to convert them had been possible not only on account of the dearth of missionaries but also and chiefly because these Indians had shown themselves very ill-disposed towards Christianity. Finally, Father Lacombe had obtained the Bishop's permission to live and travel with them and, as a result of his heroic sacrifices and his burning zeal, he had succeeded in converting about five hundred.

In his report to the Propagation of the Faith (January 10th, 1870) Bishop Grandin wrote of the Prairie Crees: "The evangelizing of this tribe is an entirely new kind of work—a kind that a Superior would willingly do himself but which he would hesitate to impose upon another. As the whole tribe lives, camps and travels together, their missionary must remain with them, going where they go and depending on their charity or, rather, on their caprices for his food and other necessities. Until they become Christians, until they learn to respect the Blessed Sacrament and the



*Oree chief Sweet Grass*

sacred vessels, the missionary must forego the great privilege of daily Mass. He must live like an Indian with no change of clothes or linen and must be satisfied with the coarsest and filthiest of food. He has to drink snow water or dirty, muddy water from the filthy, disgusting cups of the Indians. In this and in other matters he has to put up with indescribable filth.

"It was under these conditions that Father Lacombe began his ministry among these people. I am pleased to say that, to a certain extent, he has improved these conditions so that now he, his young assistant, and the Brother Catechist, who speaks Cree fluently, will not have to put up with what Father Lacombe formerly had to. Of course, they have to live with the Indians and travel with them, but they have their own small tent in which they have daily Mass and other religious exercises. Occasionally, they go to St. Paul's Mission to renew themselves in the spirit of their calling.

"The Blackfeet are far more difficult to convert than the Crees. In fact all are pagans, except a few of those whom the Crees hold prisoners and a few Half-breeds."

One of the greatest obstacles to the conversion of both tribes was the fact that they were almost constantly at war and neither tribe could understand how the Priest could be friendly to them and to their enemies. During battles and surprise attacks, the missionary's life was often in danger. The story of how, during one of these battles, at the risk of his life, Father Lacombe strove to stop the carnage is well known. Unaware that he was in the Blackfoot camp, the Crees attacked it at night. Taken by surprise, many of the Blackfeet were shot down before they could grasp their rifles. Seeing the women and children falling under the murderous fire, the heroic missionary, holding his Oblate Cross high above his head, rushed between the combatants, calling on them to stop, but his voice was drowned in the tumult. Then a bullet, which had fortunately struck some object



*Monument to Father Lacombe, O.M.I., at St. Albert*

first, hit him on the head and knocked him unconscious. "You have killed the Priest!" "You have killed the Priest!" shouted the Blackfeet. Some of the Crees heard this and they told the others; the firing stopped and the battle was over. Sometime later, the Crees apologized to Father Lacombe, but they did not return his horse and his other belongings which they had stolen.

One happy result of this incident was that, impressed by the Priest's courage and realizing that he had saved them from annihilation, the Blackfeet greatly esteemed him and began to realize that he was their friend.

A very severe epidemic of small-pox, which occurred at about this time, that is during the second half of 1870, showed the Indians how devoted were their Priests and their Bishop. The latter, arriving at Carlton towards the end of August, found nearly everyone seriously ill. He became their nurse and doctor, cared for them, washed them, and did everything he could for their bodies as well as for their souls. He showed special solicitude for those who had been abandoned by their relatives. The Protestants were as edified by their devotedness as were the Catholics—particularly as their own Minister did not emulate the Priests.

In the vain hope of escaping the epidemic, the Indians left their tents and cabins and slept out in the open. But death pursued and overtook them. With all the tenderness of a mother, the Bishop closed the eyes of the dead and prepared the hideous-looking corpses for the graves he had dug. Death struck so rapidly that, one day, he had to bury seven in one grave.

While he was engaged in this work of charity, he received a message from Father Lacombe begging him to return immediately to St. Albert where many, including several of the missionaries, were dangerously ill. Having arranged for the care of those ill at Carlton, his heart grief-laden, the Bishop, tired as he was after days and nights spent with the ill and dying, set out

for St. Albert. On his way, he came upon a camp of dying pagan Indians. He stopped, visited every man, woman and child, did what he could to allèviate their sufferings, spokē to them of the good God, instructed them, baptized them, and prepared them to die in loving submission of God's holy Will.

A little farther on, he overtook a young man fleeing to St. Albert, clasping a blanket in one hand and a piece of meat in the other, frantic with fear and shouting: "Everybody is dying! Everybody is dying!" A few hours later he, too, died and the wolves devoured his corpse. Fearing the worst, Bishop Grandin reached St. Albert. He was overjoyed to learn that his missionaries were recovering but heart-broken to find that so many others were ill and dying. The good shepherd needed rest but took none; he visited every home, every person, encouraging those who needed courage, and consoling those who needed consolation.

A poor Indian, tears streaming from his eyes, threw himself at the Bishop's feet and cried out: "Oh, Great Priest of prayer, take pity on me, pray for me. Six of my children have died and I have but one left. I am not angry at the Great Spirit for taking my five boys and my only girl, but pray to Him, beg Him to spare the one I still have." The Indian's faith was rewarded; the child lived.

The time for the fall hunt had come. What should they do? If the hunters went, would they not leave their corpses on the prairies to be devoured by the wolves? So contagious was the disease that some, if not all, would fall ill in their cold, wet camps and, without any medicine or care, would surely die. But if they did not go, famine would add its horror to those of the plague. It was decided that they should go and that Father Fourmond should accompany them.

Father Fourmond wrote: "Every time we changed camp, there were scenes of agony and despair. Frequently there were not enough of us sufficiently well to

harness the horses. How the sick suffered as they were jolted over those rough prairies! How they suffered as we passed within sight of the wild beasts which were lying in wait for their next victim to die.

"When we came to a camping ground, we put up the tents and lighted a fire in each one to warm the sick, to cook food, and to prepare medicine. These tents were only ten feet in diameter and yet I have seen ten sick and dying Indians lying around the fire in one of them.

"I spent all my time tending to the sick in our sixty tents. I cannot describe the revolting stench. When the disease was in the desiccation stage, the victims were masses of putrefaction so that it was impossible to see in them the resemblance of a human being. And still, beneath that hideous exterior there was a soul, created to the likeness of God, a soul to save!"

As soon as it was possible for him to do so, Bishop Grandin hastened to Father Fourmond's side. With this devoted Priest at first and, later, alone, the Bishop visited every tent, lighting and tending the fires, preparing and administering medicine, cooking the food, blessing the sick, hearing their confessions, giving them Holy Communion, administering Extreme Unction, encouraging or consoling the afflicted with the tenderness of a mother. We believe that we may say of his charity what was said of St. Charles Borromeo's: "Charity, like genius, has its great days!"

One day, in a tent, he found an infant striving to draw sustenance from the breasts of its dead mother. He had the child brought up and had it named Girardin after the President of the Society of the Holy Childhood.

It was greatly through this heroic devotedness of Bishop Grandin and his fellow Oblates, that, by the grace of God, the Catholic religion has been so deeply rooted in the hearts of the Indians of Western Canada and of the Far North.

Shortly before the epidemic of which we have spoken,



Bishop Grandin had started out to visit the Mantagnais. "In the beginning of August, 1870," he tells us, "after having married my faithful Jean Baptiste to an orphan, I started out for Ile à la Crosse with Brothers Péréard, Lalican, and Leriche, a guide, and the newly-married couple. We reached the Beaver River, which was exceptionally high, and we took the usual means to cross it.

"Having moved our baggage across the river on a raft, we returned to the opposite bank to bring the oxen over. We harnessed an ox to each of the three empty carts, the guide in charge of two and Brother Péréard in charge of the third. Everything went well until the Brother's ox began to swim down stream. In order the better to guide the ox, the Brother moved to one side of the cart. It immediately turned over and flung him into the river. He sank to the bottom and was carried away by the strong current. Several times he rose to the surface and shouted for help. I thought that it was all over and I pronounced the words of absolution. The guide, an excellent swimmer, threw himself into the water, and, after a hard struggle, saved the Brother's life." The ox was drowned.

There are two important matters to record before we close this chapter. In 1869 the Canadian Government bought the immense North-West Territories from the Hudson Bay Company. This meant, among other things, that there would be a new influx of colonists. "If we may judge by those who have already arrived," the Bishop wrote, "the East and the United States will send us only their scum."

The Vatican Council was held from 1869-1870. Unable to attend, Bishop Grandin wrote a letter to the Sovereign Pontiff and had all his missionaries sign their names with his. The Pope was so deeply touched by this letter that he sent a personal and almost intimate reply to Bishop Grandin.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

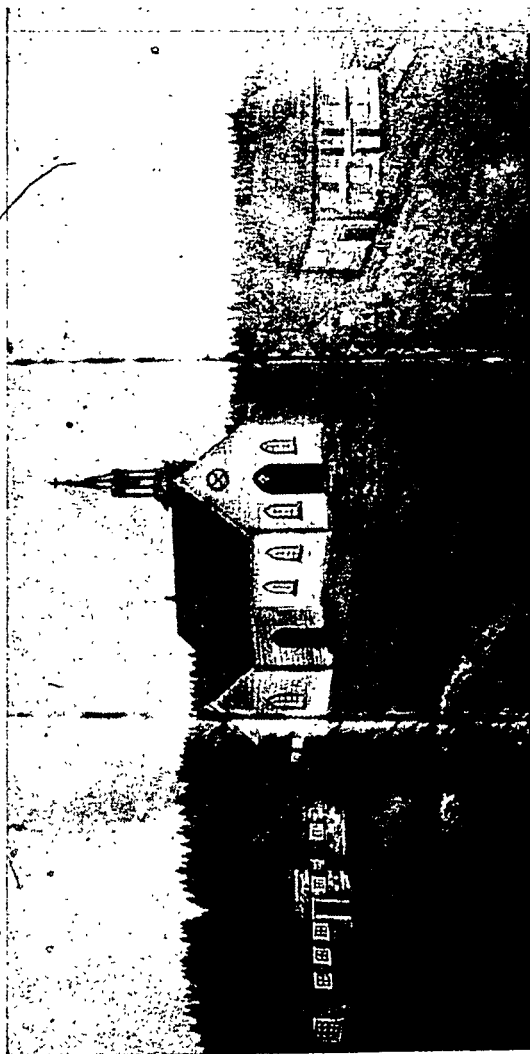
I WILL GLADLY SPEND AND BE SPENT ON YOUR SOULS' BEHALF

—II Cor. XII, 15

On the 22nd of September, 1871, the ecclesiastical Province of St. Boniface was established. The Bishop of St. Boniface became Archbishop and Metropolitan with Bishops Grandin (St. Albert), Faraud (Vicar-Apostolic of Athabaska-Mackenzie) and D'Herbomez (Mainland of British Columbia) as suffragans.

In his humility, Bishop Grandin had gladly renounced his right to succeed Bishop Taché in the then more important See of St. Boniface and, as we have seen, had already taken up his residence at St. Albert. Henceforth he was Bishop of St. Albert and Oblate Vicar in his vast diocese. To aid him in his work, he had fifteen Oblate Fathers and Brothers (by 1875 the number had risen to twenty-two) whom he had stationed at St. Albert, Lake St. Anne, St. Joachim's (Edmonton), St. Paul, Lac la Biche, Ile à la Crosse, and St. Peter's (at the northern extremity of Lake Caribou). From these centres, the missionaries evangelized the surrounding areas. He had established five elementary schools in which all the pupils were Catholics.

It was on Easter Monday (April 2, 1892) that he learned that he was no longer Vicar Apostolic, with the title of Bishop of Satala, but had become Bishop of St. Albert. On the following Sunday, he formally took possession of his diocese and consecrated it to Our Lady of Victories. Although the Cathedral was not completed, it was used for the occasion. In that distant land, this building, which measured 90 by 35 feet, and which had been built by the Bishop, the Priests and the Brothers, was considered a masterpiece of architecture and many came from a great distance to see it. Father



*Bishop Grandin's  
Residence*

*Second Cathedral at St.  
Albert in 1875*

*Convent of the  
Grey Nuns*

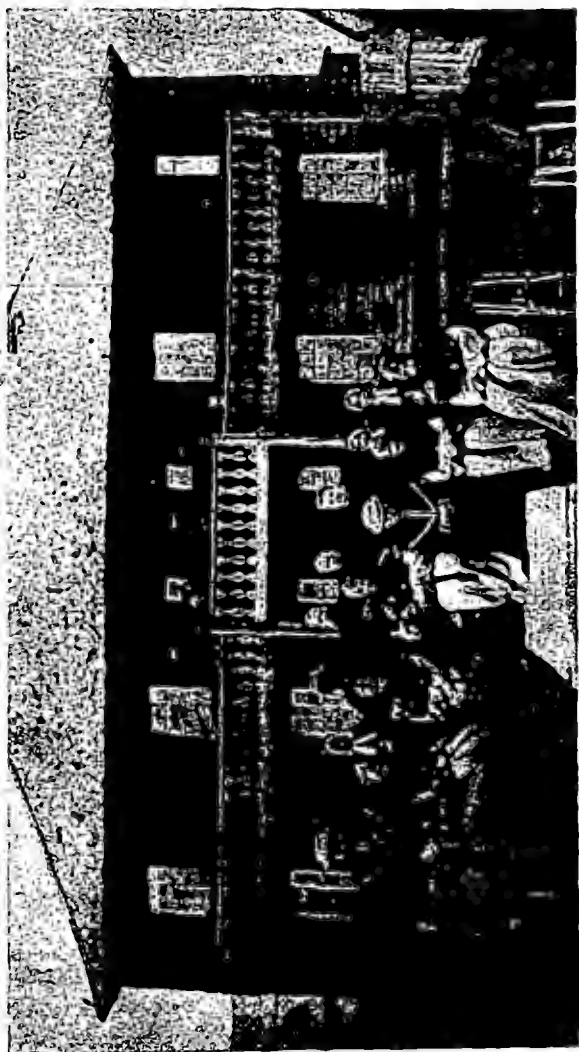
Grouard, an accomplished artist, had adorned it with several paintings.

Besides building the Cathedral, the missionaries had constructed a mill on the banks of the Saskatchewan in order to turn the country's wheat into flour. The mighty Saskatchewan carried the mill away and so another mill was built on a smaller river.

It was at this time that the Bishop's father died. This thoroughly Christian man had prepared himself for death by daily reciting the "Litany of the Dying" for the last thirty years of his life. The Bishop says in his diary: "I have asked all my missionaries to pray for the soul of my poor, dear father. We had a solemn requiem Mass for him and the whole village attended with edifying devotion."

The urgent and ever-increasing needs of the diocese alarmed the Bishop. Among the most pressing needs were more schools and more Missions and teachers to take the place of those Priests who had been obliged to become school teachers even though they were sorely needed to evangelize the Indians and the immigrants. On April 21st (1872), he wrote to Father Lacombe, appointing him Vicar General and asking him to go to the Province of Quebec to beg for help there as, after the disaster of 1870, little could be expected from generous France. In this letter, he said: "I must ask you to give up your work among the Indians for this year. Whenever it is at all possible, I will take your place. Go, I beg of you, to your native Province of Quebec and tell your friends and mine of our pressing needs. If we are to continue our work, you must get generous donations. In certain countries, some private individuals take it upon themselves to build and maintain schools and hospitals. Do your utmost to find such benefactors. I am sure you will succeed because our dear Immaculate Mother will hear our prayers.

"In France they have a Society which supports schools in the Orient. What we need is a similar society



*First Convent of the Grey Nuns at St. Albert, built in 1863*

to support our schools in the North West. With the consent of the local Bishops, try to get some good missionaries and some zealous young men willing to come to our aid and desirous of entering our Congregation. Go, my dear Father Lacombe, and may God be with you."

Both Pius IX and Leo XIII had encouraged Societies founded to aid needy schools but, in order not to embarrass the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, which was doing such excellent work, Bishop Grandin had to give up this idea of having a Society founded for the benefit of his schools. "I had only one purpose," he declared, "and that was to extend the Kingdom of Christ. God, I trust, will take into account whatever I have done to attain this end—my long, painful journeys, and especially my disappointments . . ." As we shall see, his schools were to be a source of great and endless anxiety, disappointment and grief to the courageous Bishop.

True to his promise, Bishop Grandin devoted himself to Father Lacombe's Indians. As he had not thoroughly mastered the Cree language, he took with him Brother Scollen, a subdeacon, who spoke Cree fluently, and spent several months with these Indians.

From the Bishop's account of his stay among these Indians, we give the following extracts:

"A young Indian woman left St. Paul to join her relatives who were staying far across the river. Her only companions were the dogs which drew her baggage on a sleigh and the infant which she carried on her back.

"Having reached the river, and having no other means of crossing it, the young mother, who had taken care to go to Confession and to ask for a Scapular before setting out on her perilous journey, made a small raft of branches and tied her baby on it . . . Then, although the river was wide and rapid and as cold as ice, for the snow still lay along its banks and pieces of ice floated down the stream, this young mother, having tied one

end of a cord to the raft and holding the other in her teeth, swam across to the other bank. There she lifted her baby from the raft and continued her journey as though she had done nothing extraordinary. That night, she slept beside a fire and, although she heard the wolves howl, she was no more afraid than we are when we hear a mouse."

The Indians and their missionary lived from hand to mouth. "The whole day long, on foot or on horse-back," writes the Bishop, "the men scoured the prairies, the woods, the swamps, in all directions, and, at close of day, returned with ducks, infrequently with deer, but very often with nothing. Occasionally there was a feast; generally, a famine."

Finally the hunters sighted a herd of buffalo and then there was plenty of food. The Bishop describes the first feast of the season: "When the signal was given, the Indians sat in a circle near our tent, the women forming one-half of the circle and the men the other half. While we waited for the meat to cook and the water to boil, a large pipe, the stem of which was the length of a broom handle, was solemnly passed from mouth to mouth. The missionary is the only one not obliged to smoke on these occasions.

"When the meat was cooked, a half-naked Indian fished a piece out of the cauldron for each of us. Not one of us had a fork; for knives we had our teeth, and for plates a piece of board or our hands. These circumstances neither embarrassed the Indians nor made them less expeditious in making the meat disappear.

"Then the speeches began and the pipe was again passed around. These Crees speak with such ease and elegance that, were they in Europe, every one of them would be a lawyer."

Finally the Bishop's turn came. He spoke to them of God, of His goodness and of His love, of the malice of sin, of the happiness of heaven, of the pains of hell.

He taught them their prayers and catechism and invited them to receive the Sacraments.

We have now reached the year 1873. Bishop Grandin, as Oblate Vicar of Missions, was summoned to the General Chapter which was to be held in France. Although he had so much to do at St. Albert, and although he knew what fatigue and illness the journey would occasion, he nevertheless promptly obeyed orders not only to gain the merit of obedience but also because he knew that, while in France, he would be able to work for the good of his diocese. He landed at Brest, a week before the opening of the Chapter, spent a day with his brother, Abbé Jean Grandin, who was now a Parish Priest, and paid a short visit to the remaining members of his family as well as to his benefactresses, Sisters Anne-Marie and Françoise. On the 28th of July, he said Mass at the Church of Our Lady of Victories in Paris to thank God and the Blessed Virgin for having protected him, and to ask them to continue to watch over the interests of his diocese. After paying a short visit to his Superior General, he left for Autun where, on July 31st, he celebrated the Mass with which the Oblate Chapter opened.

We shall not follow Bishop Grandin through the next six months during which in almost every corner of France and also in Italy, he pleaded the cause of his Missions and begged for alms, for prayers and for missionaries. Suffice it to say that he preached often four, sometimes five times a day, in twenty-three cathedrals, in hundreds of churches and chapels as well as in seminaries, colleges and convents. He personally visited his benefactors and the relatives of his missionaries and those outstanding benefactresses of the Oblates, the Sisters of the Holy Family. To draw down the blessing of God upon his diocese, he celebrated mass at Paray le Monial, where the Sacred Heart had appeared to Saint Margaret Mary, at Pontmain, where the Blessed Virgin had appeared to the Barbedette children



(one of whom became an Oblate), at Lourdes and at other celebrated shrines. He called on his personal friend, Cardinal Guibert, O.M.I., Archbishop of Paris, on his old friend and counsellor, the former Abbé Sébaux, who was now Bishop of Angoulême, and on the other members of the Hierarchy. There was no rest for him; when he was not preaching, he was ordaining Priests, confirming children and, wherever he went, charming and edifying those who saw and heard him. He spoke with such earnestness and simplicity and zeal for God's glory, he spoke with such burning love for God that churches and cathedrals could not accommodate the multitudes who flocked to hear him. He pleaded not only for his own Missions but, at the request of the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, for the Catholic Missions in general and to his unflagging zeal and untiring efforts, all these Missions, the world over, owe no little gratitude.

He went to Rome and reached the Vatican just as Pius IX was about to take his daily walk. Hearing of the Bishop's arrival, the Pope sent word that he wished the Bishop to accompany him during his walk. After the walk, much to the confusion of this humble Bishop, the Pope made him sit next but one to him.

On the following day, accompanied by his brother, the Abbé Jean Grandin, and by Father Martinet, one of the Oblate General's four assistants, Bishop Grandin again visited the Pope. "I offered His Holiness the best pair of buckskin gloves that I had been able to get," writes Bishop Grandin. "With genuine pleasure, the Pope immediately put them on." All the spiritual favours requested by the Bishop were granted. "On the 29th," writes the Bishop, "I visited him again. He gave me a special blessing and was delighted with Father Lacombe's ingenious Picture Catechism which he made me explain from beginning to end."

Back in France, Bishop Grandin immediately reopened his campaign for the Missions and did not rest

until his work was done and it was time for him to return to Canada.

After preaching in St. Peter's church at Basançon, he was handed an envelope which contained a donation and the following verses:

### THE MISSIONARY'S MOTHER

The heart afire with zeal divine,  
Thou leavest, child, for foreign fields;  
May God increase the zeal that's thine.  
I weep? Of joy my heart its harvest yields.

My soul is lifted up with joy,  
With courage filled and happiness;  
Today, dear God, I give my boy  
To Thee—His mother happy bless!

Dear son of mine, close to my heart,  
Oh let once more thy dear heart beat  
And, since a Priest of Christ thou art,  
I kneel, thy mother, at thy feet.

From the day on which the Oblate Chapter closed to the day on which he set sail for Canada, without respite and, as it seemed, miraculously bearing up under the strain, this indefatigable Man of God devoted every waking hour to the interests of the Missions so that "in six months he did the work of three years."

One who knew the Bishop well wrote: "The prodigious work of the Bishop of St. Albert not only immensely helped the Society of the Propagation of the Faith but it assured his own Missions of new recruits, of countless prayers, and of generous assistance. It made the wonderful work of the Oblates among the Indians known in so many parishes and Seminaries that the Oblate Novitiate will be filled with zealous young men eager to follow this apostolic Bishop. To describe what

spiritual good his words and his example did is impossible."

When he sailed from Brest on May 9th, he took with him sixteen new missionaries, some of whom were Priests, some students in theology, and some Lay Brothers. Among the most outstanding of these were Father Bonnard and the Bishop's nephew, Scholastic Brother Henri Grandin, who, highly esteemed and loved by all who knew him, was destined to become, years later, Vicar of Missions, and to die Provincial Superior of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in the diocese of his saintly uncle.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

IN FAITH, IN PATIENCE, IN LOVE, IN ENDURANCE

—II Tim. III, 10

Bishop Grandin and the caravan of missionaries reached Montreal on May 21, 1874, and, after spending about ten days there, went up the St. Lawrence by train for a distance of about five hundred miles. On a steamboat they crossed Lakes Huron and Superior and then, by train, passed through one of the most beautiful countries they had ever seen, crossing the St. Louis and Mississippi Rivers, and finally reaching a small town which had just sprung up on the Red River. For four days they sailed slowly down the Red River, which was then very shallow and which seemed to wind and curve endlessly.

One of the missionaries wrote: "This was one of the most unpleasant parts of our journey. The boat was crowded with very coarse and vulgar colonists. All the food we had was fat pork, some potatoes, and a few biscuits which we had brought with us. There were no sleeping quarters and so we stretched ourselves out on the packing cases, sacks of flour and piles of lumber.

We were tired out and often began to doze but the infernal noise around us and the bitter cold prevented us from sleeping. When we reached St. Boniface and had celebrated Mass or received Holy Communion, and had met Archbishop Taché, all our fatigue and hardships were immediately forgotten."

The Archbishop insisted that his guests spend ten days with him. His charity and thoughtfulness were not soon forgotten. After Bishop Grandin had celebrated Mass on the Feast of St. John the Baptist, he and his companions resumed their journey. This time they had to travel in the rough, jolting Red River carts which were drawn by horses almost worn out by the distance they had had to travel to reach St. Boniface. When Bishop Grandin saw those horses, he very much doubted whether he and his companions would reach their destination. However, he could obtain none better.

For two long months the caravan moved on westward. It encountered several severe storms, was pestered night and day by gnats and mosquitoes, was twice nearly robbed by marauding Indians and had great difficulty in crossing the swollen rivers. The Bishop fell ill and, as he was running a high temperature, he had to ride in an improvised ambulance. Pestilential swamps each one worse than the last, made the final two weeks of the journey the most painful.

One of the missionaries thus describes how the swollen Battle River was crossed on a raft made of the bottom of a cart and some tree trunks: "After we had moved the carts as close as possible to the water's edge, we transferred the trunks and boxes from them to the improvised raft.

"I had heard that missionary Bishops do not spare themselves in what is painful and fatiguing, and Bishop Grandin on this as on all occasions, proved the truth of this saying. We saw him, up to his knees in mud and water, unloading the carts, loading the raft, and then dragging the raft across and unloading it. He kept

this up for hours without stopping, that is until the work was finished. He was the last to quit."

The crossing of the wide and swift Saskatchewan River was more difficult and perilous but it was crossed, and late at night, on August 27, deadly tired but in good spirits, the Bishop and his missionaries reached St. Albert. They went immediately to the chapel where the long and tiring journey ended with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and the singing of the Te Deum.

The Bishop was pleased to find that, with the exception of a little work to be done on the altars, the Cathedral was completed and would easily accommodate four hundred people. Especially since the arrival of the newcomers, the Bishop's residence was too small and several had to share every room. A larger building was urgently needed, but, due to lack of funds, it was not built until five years later. We might here add that, thanks to the generosity of a Mr. Hardisty, the Bishop was able to have the first bridge in the North-West built across the Sturgeon at St. Albert.

The Bishop and the Priests were deeply afflicted by an accident which occurred in mid November. Louis Dazé, a devoted French Canadian who, refusing any remuneration, had worked for the Oblates for more than four years, was helping Father Scollen who was then preaching a mission to the Assiniboines. One day, taking his rifle along, Dazé went in search of food. Surprised by a blizzard, he wandered for five or six days without food or shelter and was found frozen to death. A fervent Catholic, his last act had been to hang his Scapular around his neck outside his clothing. The body was brought to St. Albert where the Bishop presided at the funeral.

In the beginning of May, 1874, the Bishop began a four-month tour of his diocese. At Ile à la Crosse he was overjoyed to learn that all the Indians had been converted and to find that, among those fervently pre-

paring themselves for confirmation, was his old acquaintance, the former "Son of God". After preaching a mission here and blessing a high cross, he wrote in his diary: "All the Indians here are not only Catholics, but most of them are exemplary Catholics. May God be praised!"

He then set out for the isolated and far-distant mission at Lake Caribou. Although it was July, as he neared his destination he had not only to cut the ice to make a passage for his canoe, but, when the ice became too thick, he had to drag the canoe a great distance over the frozen river. No sooner had he arrived than, with the Priests, he started to preach a mission to the Indians. When he left, the Fathers and Brothers accompanied him for about five miles and then sorrowfully returned to months of isolation. "The eight days he spent with us," wrote Father Gasté, "were days of heavenly bliss."

During this same journey he had to travel a certain distance by wagon. Far from all help, the axle broke and, as he had no tools with him, he had to repair it with his pocket knife. This took a long time and was done under a continual downpour of rain and, so, he had to sleep in his wet clothes on the wet grass. As a result of this he contracted an earache which remained with him until the day of his death and, as we shall see, frequently caused him great agony.

The words of St. Theresa come to mind: "The heaviest crosses are given to those whom God loves." And, while we are quoting, may we add the words spoken by a Protestant gentleman, Mr. MacKay, in the course of a lecture which he delivered at this time: "Assuredly this century can boast of nothing better, of nothing grander than the Oblate missionaries." We suspect that the gentleman had met Bishop Grandin.

This journey was the beginning of a life of greater suffering for the saintly Bishop. To his brother, then Parish Priest at Martigny, he wrote: "Recently I

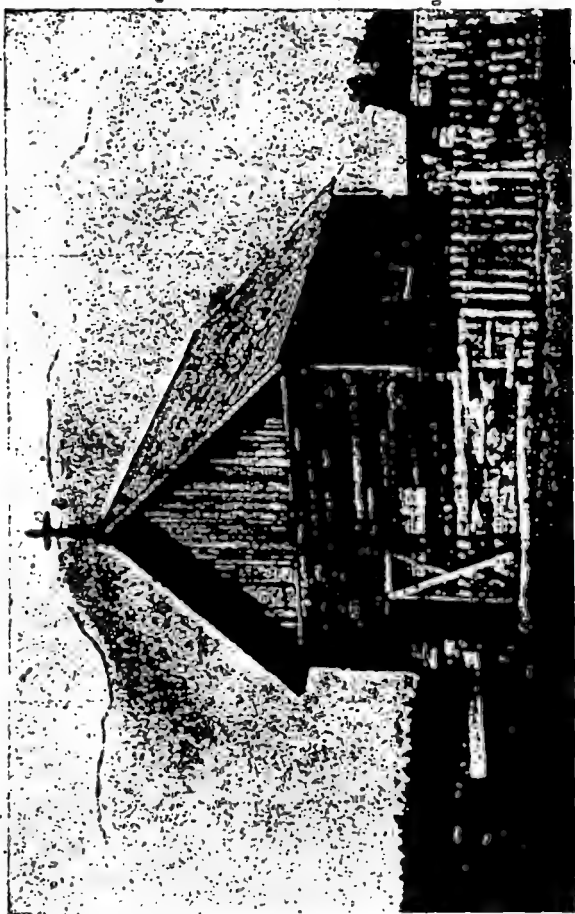
returned from a four-months pastoral visit ill and suffering intensely. For a long time I thought, as did others, that the time had come for me to render to God an account of my stewardship. This, however, now appears to be postponed. The pains in my head and ears, which caused me real agony, have greatly diminished and, at times, I try to persuade myself that they have left me. The slightest fatigue, however, brings them back. My strength refuses to return and, at forty-seven, I am a much older man than our father was when he was well past seventy.

"I had hoped to be able to start out on my missionary tours again this Spring and I had hoped that they would perhaps help me to regain my strength. However, I have been recently overwhelmed with correspondence and this has brought on a fever which I have been able to hide from others, but preparations for my trip were too much for me. I barely managed to get to Edmonton, which is only nine miles away, and when I got there, I had to go to bed for three days before I could return to St. Albert.

"The Fathers here insist that I go to France to consult specialists but I do not know what to do. I am fully determined, cost what it may, to teach a last lesson to my missionaries and to my people by dying at my post. I am fully convinced that my death would be a boon to my poor diocese. Less than ever am I the man to be at its head. Immigration is changing everything so rapidly. Frankly, I fear to compromise the glory of God. Anyone would do better than I."

What sincere humility! How admirable and touching are the words of this faithful servant, ready to surrender his charge in order that His Master be better served!

He was not to die or to be permitted to resign. He was to labour strenuously and to suffer intensely for many years to come. His loving submission to the will



*First Catholic Church in Edmonton, built in 1857*



of God and his supernatural courage increased with his sufferings.

Early in July, 1875, while he was on a pastoral visitation, another cruel blow was dealt him. The devoted and highly esteemed Brother Alexis had started out from Lake Athabaska on a trip to Lake La Biche where he was to meet Bishop Faraud who was returning from France with a contingent of missionaries. The Brother had Louis Lafrance, a Half-breed Iroquois guide, with him and an orphan girl whom he was taking to the Sisters' school at Lake la Biche.

Travellers, who had left Lake Athabaska at the same time as the Brother but who had stopped en route for several days, were greatly surprised not to find him at Lake la Biche when they arrived. Father Leduc, notified of this, immediately despatched two men on horseback and, twelve days later, they returned with the news that they believed that they had found the Brother's remains in a shallow grave at the confluence of the House and La Biche Rivers

Father Leduc sent Brother Lambert and four men to investigate. In the grave they found some bones and a bullet-pierced human skull. Not far away, they discovered a blood-stained hatchet and, close by, the remains of a fire and of a hideous meal. There were no traces of the Iroquois or of the girl but there were indications that the Brother had been murdered for trying to prevent rape and that parts of his dismembered body had been carried away for food. "I firmly believe," writes Bishop Grandin, "that Brother Alexis died the death of St. John the Baptist and is a martyr to chastity. I keep his clothing and the hatchet as precious relics."

No trace was ever found of the girl but there were indications that she, too, was probably murdered. As for the guide, he wandered over the prairies for many months and, at night, stole from the Indian camps. One night, hearing something prowling around his hut, a

Beaver Indian seized his rifle, and killed the murderer of Brother Alexis.

The Bishop's troubles were not at an end. A terrific storm struck the Mission at St. Albert during the night of July 30th (1876) and completely destroyed the grain crop which had been so promising. Hail broke one hundred and fifty panes of glass in the Cathedral, the Bishop's residence and the convent. In a letter, dated December 14th, of the same year, Bishop Grandin wrote: "A few months ago, fire destroyed the Mission buildings at St. Paul, with the result that we have no school or other establishment for the Indians there."

In the same letter he says: "We are in a period of transition. Newcomers are arriving from every point of the globe and are settling, some here, some there, according to their guesses as to where they will be near the railroad which is to be built. Thus many small villages are springing up all over the prairies and they will need Priests perhaps even more than the Indians do. Most of the newcomers are Protestants or very lax Catholics and, as many of them surpass even pagans in immorality, I fear for the poor Indians. I have not sufficient Priests to cope with the situation, particularly as the Protestant ministers are now coming in great numbers.

"For several years we have not dared establish more Indian Missions as the Government is going to make a treaty with all the Indians and may allot them land far from the churches or schools we would like to build. And so the missionaries have to wander here, there and everywhere in order to be with their flocks."

"Last summer, the Government made a treaty with the prairie Crees and next Spring it will assign land to each Chief who has twenty families subject to him. As soon as we know where these lands are, we shall have to build chapels on them. The Government had found it necessary to make these treaties in order to avoid bloodshed. The Indians were indignant when they saw

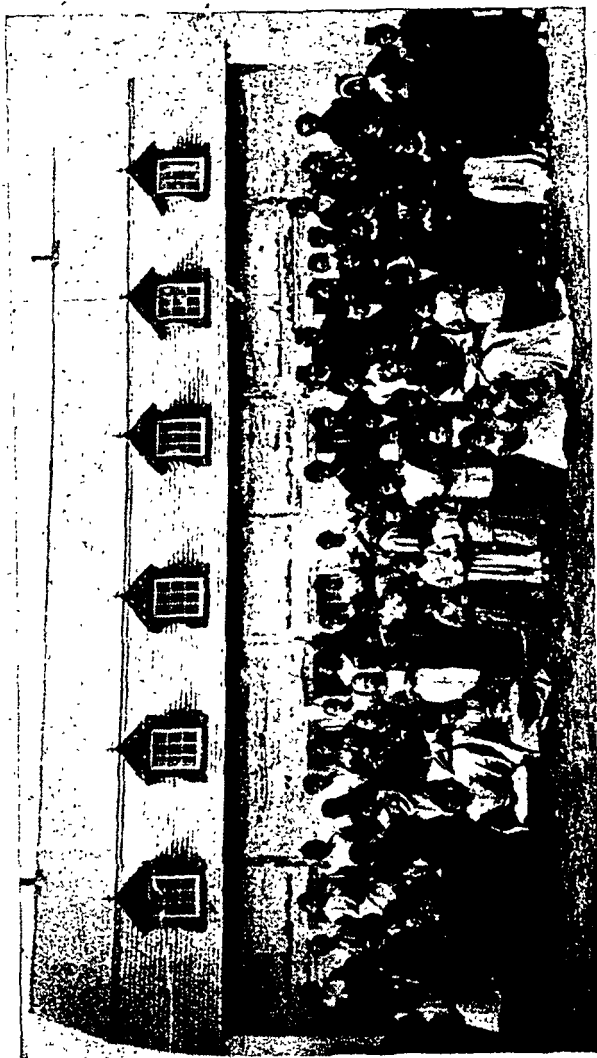
their land taken from them. It has been decided to place them on reservations, that is on tracts of land which will be inalienably theirs, and where rapacious civilization cannot take from them their means of livelihood."

The missionaries rendered great aid to the Government in the settling of this difficult question. The Indians complained that the white men had robbed them of their lands and had driven away the buffalo and beaver which formerly had been so plentiful. They saw starvation facing them and they declared that they could not make a living, as they were told to do, by tilling the soil. The Indians were in an ugly mood and such was the seriousness of the situation that detachments of Mounted Police were concentrated at strategic points. It was duly recognized, however, that it was Bishop Grandin and Father Lacombe who prevented the gathering storm from breaking.

This and other business had taken Bishop Grandin, in July 1877, to the north where he consulted Bishop Faraud. On the return journey, while descending the bank of a river, he was thrown from the wagon for a distance of about thirty feet. At first it appeared that he had injured only his wrist but, when he reached St. Albert, he found his injuries were far more serious. His former pains, particularly those in his ears and head, returned and he was again in agony.

In spite of his intense suffering, he continued to set an example to all. Not only did he scrupulously observe every point of the Oblate rule, but he continued to preach, write, and work. "He suffers so much," wrote a Lay Brother, "that the sight of him makes us weep."

Finally Father Leduc, the Bishop's first Consultor, felt himself obliged to address a circular letter to the Oblates of the Diocese. "The state of His Lordship's health," said the letter, "is becoming worse. The terrible pains in his ears are more severe than ever. So far, all the efforts of the doctors and of our good Sisters



*First School of the Grey Nuns in St. Albert. Later it became a part of the Junior Seminary*

have been unavailing as have been our public and private prayers. His sufferings are excruciating. It is heart-rending to see him toss on his bed of agony. God alone knows what the outcome will be.

"In spite of what he has to endure, he thinks of you and speaks of you even during the most cruel of his crises.

"It is unnecessary to add that, in spite of his pain, he continues to practise the most heroic virtues."

Informed of Bishop Grandin's critical state of health, the Oblate Superior General urged him to come to France in order to consult specialists. "Your missions still need you," wrote the General.

On the Feast of the Assumption, 1877, the Fathers and Brothers of St. Albert in a body begged the Bishop to follow the General's suggestion. He finally consented and, having confided the direction of the diocese to Father Leduc, left St. Albert in order to . . . labour in France for his Missions.

In Montreal he met a niece who, wishing to devote her life to her uncle's Indians, had entered the Congregation of the Grey Nuns. This was the Sister Grandin, who was to do so much for the Bishop during his last illness.

Fatigued and suffering intensely, he landed at Le-Havre on the 18th of November, 1877.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

WHAT JOURNEYS I HAVE UNDERTAKEN!.... I HAVE MET TOIL AND WEARINESS.... ALL THIS OVER AND ABOVE SOMETHING ELSE WHICH I DO NOT COUNT, — I MEAN THE BURDEN I CARRY EVERY DAY, MY ANXIOUS CARE FOR ALL THE CHURCHES.

—II Cor. XI, 26-29

Bishop Grandin spent two years in France but, in spite of the efforts of the leading specialists, his sufferings were not greatly alleviated and his deafness in-

creased. We should add that, although he faithfully followed the prescribed treatment, he did not take the rest he needed to ensure recovery.

A friend wrote in March, 1878, "Bishop Grandin is spending his time in France working for his Missions. During the three months he has been here, he has been very busy preaching. The many churches and religious institutions in Paris almost fight for the privilege of having him preach and everywhere his words have deeply moved his hearers and have profoundly interested them in the work of saving souls. Let us pray that God grant him health and strength!"

It was at this time that he learned of the death of Pius IX. He immediately wrote to the Oblates and the Sisters of his diocese extolling the work and the virtues of the deceased Sovereign Pontiff.

On February 25th at Fréjus, he assisted at the episcopal consecration of a fellow Oblate, Msgr. Balain, Bishop of Nice. Another Oblate, Cardinal Guibert, Archbishop of Paris, presided at the imposing ceremony.

Bishop Grandin had the happiness of being one of the first to pay his respects to Leo XIII and to receive a most affectionate welcome from him.

In June, an article in a Review said: "Bishop Grandin is assisting Cardinal Guibert in the arduous task of administering confirmation in the archdiocese of Paris. Every day, the Bishop confirms large numbers of children in one, two, and even three churches. His health is not restored, but it appears at least somewhat improved."

He attended the Oblate annual retreat in October. One who followed the retreat wrote: "It would have been impossible for us not to have felt ourselves drawn to recollection as we saw the Superior General, Bishop Grandin, and Bishop Clut:scrupulously following every exercise of the retreat and conducting themselves with such unfeigned humility and obedience. It was par-

ticularly edifying to see those two truly apostolic Bishops kneel at the General's feet and fervently renew their vows according to the custom of the Congregation."

Immediately after the retreat, Bishop Grandin went to preach in Belgium where Cardinal Deschamps not only cordially welcomed him but also gave him a precious relic of St. Albert. We might note that, during this journey, as on all others, he travelled third class in order to save money for his Missions.

In Belgium he visited and spoke in several Seminaries. His theme was always the same: "If you come to my Missions your life will be a continuous martyrdom, not a glorious martyrdom but a most prosaic one and what you suffer will be known only to God and to yourselves. What awaits you there is daily self-immolation, privation, solitude, illness, slander and calumny. If it is a mere desire for adventure that urges you to give ear to my plea for missionaries, in God's name stay at home! But if you wish to sanctify yourselves by sacrificing all that you have and are, then come! You will find a field in which to suffer and to labour for the greater glory of God."

From Paris he sent to the Society of Catholic Missions a long report from which we quote the following: "The diocese of St. Albert is divided into two very distinct parts: the south-west which can be colonized, and the north-west which, as nothing will grow there, cannot. Each section is as large as France. The population appears to be ever on the move and, so, it is impossible to say exactly how many souls there are. In round numbers I would say that there are about fifty thousand of whom less than a third are Catholics.

"There are quite a few Half-breeds. They are beginning to give up their nomadic life and to do a little farming. As a rule, they will not consent to settle on the land unless they are assured that a Priest will be stationed close to them.

"During the last two years particularly, we have



*Father Edward Cunningham, O.M.I., first native Albertan priest*



been almost able to cope with the situation. In the south-west, we have established at least seven new Missions. I should point out that these new Missions are nothing more than rough sheds which are used as a church and dwelling place for one or two missionaries."

At about this time, Father Leduc wrote: "We have only two pupils in our minor Seminary at St. Albert and, in October, two Scholastic Brothers will be the only students at our Major Seminary which is also at St. Albert. Several Half-breeds started to study Latin but only one has persevered. His Lordship's nephew, Father Grandin, is the Rector and entire staff of these two Seminaries and he devotes himself to this work with a zeal worthy of the highest praise."

But let us return to Bishop Grandin in France. The Bishops of Laval and Séez were both ill and so they asked Bishop Grandin to administer Confirmation in their stead. He spent two months in their dioceses confirming and, with their permission, begging for his Missions.

After he had administered the Sacrament of confirmation to eight hundred children at St. Leonard's church in Alençon and was about to leave the sanctuary, Canon Lebarton, having asked him to be seated on the episcopal throne, went to the pulpit and thus addressed him: "My Lord Bishop, during these few days in which it has been my privilege to enjoy your kind and saintly company, I have at length realized how beautiful in the eyes of God are the life and labours of a missionary."

"Five and twenty years ago you left behind you here in France those to whom you were so affectionately attached. You went to the poor Indians of the frozen wilds of North America and, for the love of them and of Christ, another Paul, you became one of them, living their life, eating their food which was often worse than I dare mention from this pulpit, dressing as they dressed in the skins of wild beasts, sharing their filthy lodges, endeavouring to sleep in their midst but unable to rest

because of the vermin that devoured you." And this you did in order to gain them to Christ.

"Your visit here has shown me more than that. Brethren, I have peered into the soul of this heroic Apostle and in it I have seen the deepest, the most sincere humility, and also that sure sign of holiness, perfect obedience.

"How many times, my Lord Bishop, have I suggested that you preside at a ceremony, preach a sermon, visit a school, a bed of sickness, or the salons of society? No matter what you were doing, no matter how busy you were, no matter how ill or fatigued, you immediately left whatever you were doing in order to do whatever I requested. Your soul craved to obey. Many a time, when you were preaching, you glanced at me for a sign as to whether you should continue or break the thread of your discourse. God and His blessed angels must have admired such humility, such holy simplicity, such obedience.

"My Lord Bishop, in my name and in the name of the Priests here assembled, I am going to ask you to give a public proof of your humility here in this church, before this congregation. You see these Priests who surround you? They and I beg to be allowed publicly to kiss your feet which, over snow and ice and boundless prairies, have carried the good tidings of the Gospel to the Indians, those feet which have grown so tired and weary that now they can scarcely carry your worn-out frame.

"It is but just that we honour them and, through them, your Lordship's person. What we are about to do, we do it in the name of all the Priests and people of this diocese who have been so honoured and blessed and edified by your presence."

We need not add that the congregation was deeply moved and edified as thirty Priests, one by one, knelt down and kissed the Bishop's feet. Among these Priests was Bishop Grandin's brother. During the ceremony,

a woman cried out: "How I would thank God should my son become a missionary!"

Bishop Grandin was visibly embarrassed. "During the whole ordeal," he said that evening, "I recited the 'Miserere'."

After attending the Oblate General Chapter, Bishop Grandin returned to Canada. He was accompanied by Father Leduc, who had represented the Oblates of St. Albert at the meeting, and by two other Priests, two Lay Brothers, and two young men desirous of becoming Brothers. He brought with him a considerable number of Mass vestments and sacred vessels.

In Quebec he received, as usual, from the generous French-Canadians additional recruits and mission supplies. He and his party made a very brief stop at St. Boniface and soon reached the newly-established mission at Duck Lake in his diocese. Here, he and his companions were cordially welcomed by Father Fourmond. This devoted Priest wrote: "We had not yet completed our buildings and we had no furnishings. We used to eat our meals squatting on the floor after the Indian fashion. I had to honour my Bishop and so I found an empty nail keg and this served as his chair. We placed a door on two crates and that made an excellent table. Unfortunately I could offer my visitors only some coarse bread and some far from appetizing pemmican."

Father Fourmond took his guests to St. Lawrence where the Bishop gave Benediction: "After Benediction," continues Father Fourmond, "we exchanged whatever news we had. His Lordship had so much to tell us about the Pope, the Church, and what he had seen in France, that the hours slipped by unobserved and it was late when we went to sleep. The Bishop was tired when he arrived but he seemed to derive new strength from the pleasure he was giving us."

Describing the arrival at St. Albert of Bishop Grandin and his companions, November 20, 1879, one of the latter wrote: "As we came to the crest of a hill and



*The second Residence of Bishop Grandin, which became the Convent of the Grey Nuns in 1886*

within sight of the Mission, we heard a volley of musketry; it was the villagers greeting their Bishop. From then on, every five minutes, there was another volley and the thunder of cannon lent by the Hudson Bay Co. for the joyful occasion. As his Lordship reached a beautiful triumphal arch, Fathers and Brothers, vested in surplices, greeted him with an address and with the hymns: 'O Priest and Pontiff,' 'Blessed is He who Cometh in the Name of the Lord,' and 'O God, We Give Thee Praise.' Bells rang, the cannon boomed, flags and banners floated in the breeze and the sun shone down as in midsummer. A procession formed and conducted the Bishop first to the Cathedral, where he gave Benediction, and then to his newly-finished residence which he insisted on blessing before he entered it. He then told us that he was really glad to be back among his flock and that it was his desire to live and die in our midst.

"That night, his head and ears caused him intense suffering but he was greatly relieved when an abscess burst."

During the years 1880 and 1881, he visited his whole diocese. This took great courage as he was no longer young, and as his infirmities never left him.

While camped on the banks of the Sturgeon during this journey, he wrote to the Bishop of Laval (April 12, 1880): "Today more than ever we of the North-West must be farmers so as to show the Indians how to till the land and thus save themselves from starvation. The Mission at St. Albert is a combined orphanage and model farm. We should have twenty such establishments in the diocese but our poverty permits of only three."

"The period of transition which the Indians were traversing," wrote Father A. G. Morice, O.M.I., "was telling on the proud children of the plains. Unaccustomed to manual labour, they were loath to resort to agriculture for a living; and yet the disappearance of the buffalo, now yearly more evident, was gradually forcing on them a mode of living for which they felt

the greatest repugnance.

"The stately Blackfeet, whose tribe still numbered six thousand souls, had been reduced to the necessity of eating their dogs, after which they had stooped to gophers and even to mice or the carcasses of dead animals, when they did not live on roots and old skins. The Government sent them rations but these were very far from sufficient."

Father Doucet wrote in a similar vein: "I could scarcely recognize in these thin, emaciated victims of starvation, weak and almost unable to speak, those stalwart splendid Indians, veritable giants, whom I had seen before. It was no longer men whom I came to see but walking skeletons. The children and the old people especially have succumbed to the scourge. Mothers could no longer nurse the poor little things who died in their arms."

The letters he wrote at the time show Bishop Grandin heart-broken. After praying over the graves of Father Légeard, Brother Dubé, and Sister Dandurand at Ile à la Crosse, he wrote: "Among those Indians whom he had baptized and instructed, who preceded or followed him to the grave, Father Légeard awaits the blessed Resurrection. My eyes were moist with tears and my heart is filled with grief. Here among so many dear friends, I would fain lie down and rest forever."

He spent most of the winter at St. Albert but resumed the visitation of his Missions early in the spring. During this journey, his infirmities increased but, despite the torture he suffered, he preached, heard confessions, conducted missions, wrote countless letters, kept his diary, and laboured as strenuously and faithfully as ever.

It was at this time that he wrote: "Since the Indians have signed the treaties and since there are soldiers here to protect the white people, almost countless Ministers of various religious sects have come. Their present strategy is not to attack us but to tell the people that

they teach the same religion as we do and have come only because we are too few.

"One evening, a Chief asked me to visit him. Poor man! If the church permitted polygamy, he would be a Christian. As I left his tent he accompanied me and, showing me a beautiful horse, he said: 'This is my best horse, I trained him myself. Bishop, he is yours.'

"I would have preferred to refuse the gift because when an Indian makes a gift he expects a richer one in return. But I so needed a horse that I gratefully accepted this one."

Severe illness constrained him to return to St. Albert in mid-July. "I came here worn out and suffering intensely. Dear God, when will all this ceaseless travelling end? How willing I would rest if for me rest and duty could be reconciled!"

Four days later, he heroically resumed the visitation of his diocese, completed it and returned to St. Albert on the sixteenth of October.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE INSULTS, THE HARDSHIPS, THE PERSECUTIONS, THE TIMES OF DIFFICULTY I UNDERGO FOR CHRIST.

—II Cor. XII, 10

The French Republic had driven Religious Orders and Congregations from France in 1880. As a result, many Oblates went to work or to complete their studies in other countries. Among these was a young diocesan Priest, the Abbé Emile Legal, who had entered the Oblate Novitiate. After he had taken vows and had exercised the Sacred Ministry in Eastern Canada and the United States, his Superior General sent him to St. Albert. The Provincial of Eastern Canada wrote to Bishop Grandin: "In giving you Father Legal, the Superior General is making you a most valuable present." A few months later Bishop Grandin wrote to the Sup-

erior General: "Among the Priests, whom you recently sent me, two are exceptionally outstanding. If they continue as they have started, I believe that one of them will be my successor."

His one real consolation in his worries was the zeal and devotedness of his Priests and Brothers. By word, by letter, by example, he sought to maintain and increase their zeal and their love for God and for souls. During the annual retreats, he used to speak to them out of the fullness of his heart. He used to speak to them with such burning zeal that, at the close of the retreat, they could not but exclaim, as did the disciples of Emmaus: "Was not our heart burning within us as he spoke!" More compelling than the words he spoke, however, was the example he always set.

At about this time, he was deeply afflicted by the death of two excellent missionaries. Father Hert, two years after his arrival, was found dead on the shore of a lake, a victim of overwork. Father Chapelière's death was as tragic. Although in duty bound to do so, the Government Agent did not provide food for the children of Our Lady of Pontmain Mission, and Father Chapelière had only boiled barley to give them. To vary the menu he used to do a little hunting. On one of these expeditions, his canoe overturned and threw him and his companions into the water. As two of the younger children could not swim, he tried to assist them and the three of them were drowned.

The persecution in France greatly grieved the Bishop, not only because he and most of his missionaries were from that country but also because it would prevent him from getting further recruits from that land of missionaries. And, since colonists continued to flow into his diocese in ever-increasing numbers, he needed Priests more than ever.

To the Bishop, the railway and the steamboat and the consequent opening up of the country meant progress, certainly; but they also meant more work and



more sacrifice if he was to combat not only heresy but also a shameless disregard for even common decency. "The whole country," he wrote in 1882, "is rapidly changing and filling up. I simply cannot meet all the demands for Priests made upon me. At present, I am building seven chapels, seven homes, a hospital and a church, and I haven't the money to pay for them. You cannot realize my worries and my anxiety."

The construction of the transcontinental railway referred to had been started by the Government, but progress was slow and the enterprise was given over to a private Company formed in 1881, and known as the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. The last rail was laid on November 7, 1885.

In connection with the Railway, we may be permitted to repeat a well-known story. The railway was to traverse the Blackfoot reservation, but the Indians were resolved that their land should not be taken. Their Chief, Crow Foot, who could muster 1500 well-armed warriors, decided to massacre the crew. Fortunately for the workmen, Father Lacombe had won great influence over these Indians. Informed of their intentions, he telegraphed the C.P.R. headquarters and, armed with their promises, he hastened to see Crow Foot and his warriors. He began his discourse to those Indians with the words: "If there is one among you who can say that, during the fifteen years which I have spent in your midst, I have once given bad advice, let him stand up and without fear say so." He appeased the Indians, the men were not molested, and the C.P.R. was built. The Company showed its gratitude to Father Lacombe during his life and even after his death.

When the main line had been constructed, countless branch lines were built. As a result, hordes of immigrants came from all parts of the world and settled along these lines. Here, there, and everywhere, where formerly only Indian camps and the buffalo could be seen, countless towns sprang up as if by magic.

To favour colonization, the Government, having had all tillable land surveyed, sold pieces of it to immigrants at a nominal price and gave them the right to buy adjoining land. Everywhere beautiful sites were set aside for schools.

The vast majority of the immigrants were of Anglo-Saxon origin and members of the Protestant religion and those in high places were not only non-Catholics, but anti-Catholics. As a result of this, the development of the Catholic religion was hampered in every way. Thus, in the diocese of St. Albert, the supervision of the Indian Reservations was confided to Protestant agents and Protestant instructors in farming. On more than one occasion, a Protestant school was imposed on a reserve, the inhabitants of which were almost entirely Catholics. While Protestants were always allowed to build a Protestant school next to a Catholic school, the reverse was not tolerated. On certain reserves, the Catholic school, filled with children, was denied assistance, whereas in almost empty schools the Protestant teachers were generously paid. Catholic parents, who sent their children to a Catholic school were subjected to intolerable vexations. Moreover, since the Indian tribes had been split up by the multiplication of small reserves, which the Indians were forbidden to leave, the missionaries were no longer able to bring the Indians together in large gatherings. In a word, fanaticism was in power and how many adepts it made with its bribes and its easy-going teaching in morals!

Bishop Grandin, with the intrepidity with which he had often faced death, rose to defend the rights of Catholics. He would not bow before the might of this world. With the courage of the great Bishops of all ages, like the indomitable De Mazenod fighting the cause of the Pope against French renegades, he faced the storm and valiantly defended the rights of parents and the interests of the Church. His first step was to write to the Minister of the Interior: "Even to myself I do not

like to admit that we are persecuted; but I must yield to evidence. I regret to have to say, Sir, that you have forced me to the conclusion that I was wrong in trusting you; you could easily correct what is wrong, but instead of doing so, you but increase the persecution.

"It is useless to tell me that only your subordinates are to blame. It is evident that they have received their orders. From whom have these orders come? Your persistence in employing only Protestants on the reservations has a motive behind it. I cannot be blind to facts; I cannot ignore the many proofs which show that the Indian Department of set purpose is ill-treating us; yes, and even persecuting us. The Indian Department is but another name for you, as you are at its head.

"Clearly recognizing that you are deliberately persecuting us, it is our right and our duty to defend ourselves. The best way for me to do this is for me to make public the thousand annoyances and injustices with which you afflict us. I shall have to make known the dishonourable and treacherous use made of a letter I wrote you: you published not the letter which I sent to you but only excerpts whereby you deliberately made the public believe that I had written the very opposite of what I had written.

"It will deeply pain me to go to that extreme but, in conscience, I believe that, as a Bishop, it is my duty to do so and I assure you that I will not hesitate to do this, especially as my career is fast coming to an end. Before long I expect to have to render an account of my stewardship to God, Whom alone I fear and before Whom I would be afraid to appear should I in this matter be unfaithful to my duty. I am fully prepared to take this course and I will take it unless justice is done."

Archbishop Taché and Bishop Leflèche solemnly approved a brief in which, with relentless logic, Bishop Grandin exposed his grievances, and the Minister of the Interior, having doubtless learned of its contents, prom-

ised an investigation. The investigation was held, but like most Governmental investigations, it produced no result.

Then, firmly determined to do his duty to the bitter end, Bishop Grandin went to Ottawa. "If I fail," he wrote, "I will not be afflicted beyond measure because I am working only for the good God. I shall be rewarded not for my success but for my efforts and for my good intentions. My one wish is to spend my life in doing good."

Bishop Grandin went to Ottawa. He went directly to the Oblate College but Bishop Duhamel of Ottawa insisted that he stay with him. This distinguished Prelate and Father Tabaret, O.M.I., Rector of St. Joseph's College, accompanied him on nearly all his visits to the Government during that winter (1882-1883). The visits he paid to the Prime Minister, to the Lieutenant Governor of the North-West, and to the Governor-General of Canada made a deep impression on these men.

Under the title, "A Hero From the North-West," a Montreal newspaper published an article from which we quote the following: "The Government officials at Ottawa were at first surprised at but have now become accustomed to the frequent visits of one who should have been known to them all. Of noble bearing, tall and erect despite his snow-white hair, privation and suffering deeply stamped on his venerable face, this truly noble Prelate, before whom Protestant and Catholic instinctively bow, is Mgr. Grandin of St. Albert.

"For seven and twenty years he has lived with the Indians, has suffered with and for them, has wept and rejoiced when they did. Over the scorching prairies in summer, over their vast lakes and treacherous rivers, over ice and snow-covered plains in winter, he has followed them. When he arrived in their midst, the tomahawk and the scalping knife were in daily use and, if these cruel weapons have been laid aside, it is because

of the words he has spoken to them and of the deeds he has done. One can readily understand how he loves them as a father loves his children and how his heart now bleeds as he sees them robbed, maltreated, persecuted, and driven to death by starvation.

"Let us hope that the Cabinet Ministers will see things in their true light and that they will give him more than empty promises, that they will grant him not what charity, but what cold justice demands. If they are sincere in their protests that they wish to make colonization in the West a success, they will do well, if not to favour, at least to do justice to the Catholic Missions."

The Bishop's courageous stand was not without results; full justice was not done, but the most important of his demands were met.

The Canadian Hierarchy met at Quebec, January 1st, 1883. and, at Bishop Grandin's request, ordered that an annual collection be taken up for the schools of the North-West. He was commissioned to draft a joint pastoral letter on this subject and, in the letter, to make an appeal to young men desirous of becoming Oblate Lay Brothers. Of them he wrote: "Our Brothers are missionaries, humble and hidden missionaries, it is true, but nevertheless real missionaries who, in their sphere, co-operate with the Priests in advancing civilization and in extending the reign of Christ. Some of them are expert carpenters, others are qualified mechanics, tailors, farmers, cobblers, and so on. All of them work hard and faithfully but, like the Priests and Bishops, they work not for earthly gain but exclusively for the glory of God and the salvation of souls."

We fear that in these pages we have not sufficiently stressed Bishop Grandin's great love and admiration for these "Hidden Apostles". It was his delight to spend his recreation with the Brothers. He always manifested the greatest respect towards them and sincerely loved them with the charity of Christ. No wonder then,

that the saintly Brother Gérante used to say: "It was good to live with Bishop Grandin."

Having preached the annual retreat to his benefactresses, the Grey Nuns of Montreal, and having completed his mission in Eastern Canada, Bishop Grandin set out for the West with Father Soullier, personal representative of the Superior General, Father Tabaret, Rector of St. Joseph's College, two Priests and two Lay-Brothers, four young men of whom two wished to be Priests and two wished to be Brothers, and with eight Sisters whom Father Soullier had brought from France.

The story of how these Sisters came to teach in Western Canada is worth the telling. As the number of Catholics in the diocese of St. Albert increased, it became necessary to establish boarding schools for girls and high schools. Having in vain applied to several Congregations for Sisters qualified for this work, Bishop Grandin finally wrote (March 22, 1882) to the Superior General of the Faithful Companions of Jesus, whose Mother House was at St. Anne D'Auray in France. "Your Sisters," he wrote, "will have to live a life of sacrifice and their sole reward will be the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls." "You ask us to sacrifice ourselves," came the reply, "we shall willingly do that."

When the Sisters arrived, the Bishop was delighted. They were just what his diocese needed. Some of them were French, others were English, and all were fervent religious and excellent teachers.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

WE HAVE NEVER ASKED FOR HUMAN PRAISE

—I Thess. II, 6

When Bishop Grandin reached St. Albert, he found that preparations had been made to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of his elevation to the episcopate. The

day chosen was September 16th. Well aware of the love and veneration which his Priests, Brothers, Sisters and people had for him, he would have preferred to have no public manifestation of their joy and affection and to have spent the day in colloquy with the God he loved. He knew, however, how they had looked forward to and had prepared for the celebration and, therefore, through love for them and, as formerly in the church of Alençon, reciting the Miserère, he went through what was an ordeal for him.

After Mass on September 15th, as the bells of the Cathedral and the convent rang out their joy, in stole and surplice and accompanied by the Very Reverend Father Soullier, he entered a gaily decorated hall and was enthusiastically greeted by twenty-one Oblate Fathers, his only diocesan Priest, fifteen Lay Brothers and four Seminarians. Visibly moved, Father Leduc thus addressed the jubilarian: "My Lord, He to whom all hearts are open, one day deigned to look down upon these boundless prairies and there he saw a few Oblate Fathers and Brothers engaged in the sublime work of making known His Holy Name. He fastened His gaze upon the most humble of these missionaries and with him He was pleased. He chose him to receive the fullness of the Priesthood and to be the founder of this diocese. 'God chose the weak things of the world.' Yes, He chose humility, meekness, charity, and with them He wrought wonders.

"Today, gathered from all parts of your diocese, we, your Priests, affectionately greet you. This Feast is our joy and our glory, for the father's joy and happiness reflects upon his children. We pledge you our loyalty and our affection.

"These richly embroidered vestments are a token of your nephew's love and veneration; these adoring angels, masterpieces of carving, are offered to you by one of those Lay Brothers whom you love so dearly. These beautiful Altar lamps, this precious Ostensorium,



*Father Patrick Beaudry, O.M.I., second native Albertan priest*



these and other gifts, silently tell you of the love and veneration in which you are held. May God and His dear Immaculate Mother spare you to us for many years."

The Very Rev. Father Soullier then spoke and, in the name of the Oblates, offered Bishop Grandin a chalice and a missal.

"I am deeply touched," replied the Bishop, "and I am sincerely grateful for these marks of affection and of respect. I am grateful to you who are here and to my many relatives and friends and benefactors who are absent."

"Today you honour me, but this honour is due first to the Oblate Congregation which founded this diocese and which gave me the zealous Priests and Brothers who did the work for which I am given credit. A great deal of honour and gratitude is due to those Societies 'The Propagation of the Faith' and 'The Holy Childhood', for, without their continual and generous alms, we could have done nothing. Reverend Fathers, Brothers and Sisters, I appreciate how much I and my diocese owe you."

"I realize what a burden, what a cross I have been to you and what sacrifices I have had to ask of you. I know that I am weak and that is why for my coat of arms I chose a reed leaning on the Cross."

To interpret the sentiments of the most important tribes, Fathers Lacombe, Rémas and Gasté, spoke in Cree, Blackfoot and Montagnais. The Grey Nuns and the Faithful Companions of Jesus then paid their respects. The day closed with solemn Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and a family gathering of the Oblates.

On the morrow, at High Mass, Father Lestanc preached: "Two score years ago," he said, "far from here there lived a young boy who divided his time between study and the tending of his sheep. His parents, whose only wealth was their intense love of God, earned

their bread at the sweat of their brows. Beloved and highly esteemed by all, their one ambition was to bring up their children in the fear and love of God. With great docility, precocious piety and remarkable affection, their son Vital admirably responded to his parents' care.

"God was well pleased with this child and chose him, another Paul, to be a vessel of election destined to bear the Gospel tidings to distant nations which sat in the shadow of death. Like another Samuel, the boy listened to the voice of God, but in his humility, he feared that the call he heard might be an illusion. However, the Guardian Angels of those poor souls whom he was called to save gave him no peace and kept ceaselessly calling to him, as did the Angel of Macedonia to St. Paul: 'Come to our country and help us.'

"Then Vital said to his director: 'I would like to be a Priest, I would like to be a missionary, but I have neither the virtues nor the talents for that sublime calling.' 'Do you not know, my child', replied the venerable Priest, 'that to accomplish His greatest designs, God chooses the weak things of this world?' These words gave the boy courage; they were a charm which lessened his difficulties and enabled him to overcome all obstacles. These difficulties and obstacles were many; at times they appeared unsurmountable, but, by the grace of God, they did not stop the young man, and in due time he entered the Oblate Scholasticate at Marseilles to prepare himself to do battle for Christ in these distant, pagan lands.

"Ordained Priest and sent to North-Western Canada, he threw himself heart and soul into the fray. Speaking of apostles, holy writ compares them to the sun rising as a giant, pursuing his course westward and enlightening the world. Is this not a picture of our venerable Jubilarian, who rose in the East, paused a moment at the Red River, and then went on enlightening and, with divine love, warming the frozen North? This young missionary, preaching the Gospel to the poor, expected

no recognition in this world for his services, when to his utter consternation, the Vicar of Christ called him, as most worthy among the worthy to the Episcopacy. He, who as a young man, had believed himself unworthy to be a missionary, was called by God to be a Bishop.

"After he had preached the Gospel in the far North, to the Montagnais, whom he loved, God sent him to the Crees and Blackfeet. What is there that he has not done, what is there that he has not suffered for these Indians? Ask the highways and byways, ask the mighty lakes and rivers, ask the very ocean, and the cathedrals, churches and seminaries in France, in Belgium, in Quebec, and in the United States; ask the forests and the prairies, for all of these bear witness to the miracle of his zeal, of his courage, of his self-sacrifice for the good of his Missions and for the extension of the Kingdom of Christ. How has this reed, apparently ever ready to fall, stood firm against all the assaults of man and demon? How? Because he has leaned upon the Cross and put his trust in Christ. Christ has not failed him; He has given him a zealous Clergy, devoted Brothers, heroic Sisters, generous benefactors.

"Let us beg God that our venerated Bishop may be spared to do more good. So far, his career has been most fruitful, but his diocese and its needs are immense. Let us all rally round our leader, let us redouble our efforts, and let us be, in this world as in the next, his joy, his crown, and his glory."

At the dinner which followed, the Very Reverend Father Soullier said: "Rejoice, my lord, and enjoy the fruits of your labour for, in spite of your physical sufferings and your constant worries, you are indeed a happy Bishop. You are a happy Bishop because, while scrupulously doing your duty, you have won the affection of your Clergy; your Lay Brothers, your devoted Sisters and your people."

And what did the bishop say? "The main thing is that this is all for the greater glory of God."

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

A VOICE WAS HEARD ON HIGH OF LAMENTATION AND MOURNING, OF RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN

—Jeremias XXXI, 15

The Half-breeds in Alberta, and Saskatchewan had long brooded in their discontent. The Government had not granted them titles to the land they occupied and had apparently forgotten the solemn promise made in 1883 to Father Leduc and Mr. Maloney, the Half-breeds' delegates. Exasperated, they finally sent for Louis Riel and requested him to place himself at the head of an insurrection. Riel, a Manitoba Half-breed, outlawed after the Manitoba Rebellion of 1869, was then seven hundred miles away in Montana.

What side would the missionaries take? It was whispered among the Half-breeds that the Priests were not in sympathy with them, even though Bishop Grandin had clearly stated the missionaries' position to Riel. "I replied," wrote the Bishop, "that, as we had not been informed of their demands, we could not be either for or against them. I made it clear that if they merely demanded their just rights, we would side with them, but that we could not support a revolution."

The insurrection broke out on March 18th, 1885. There were skirmishes, people fled, some were made prisoners, there was looting, there were brutal attacks and, as some pagan Crees and Sioux under Chief Big Bear had joined the Half-breeds, there were deeds of unrestrained violence. Father Lacombe's energy and influence had stopped the powerful Blackfoot nation from flocking to Riel's aid just as Bishop Grandin and his other missionaries, particularly Fathers Legal and Scollen, had previously prevented the Christian Crees and Sioux from joining the uprising.

After two months of fighting, Canadian troops put down the insurrection on May 14th. But what damage

had been done! How many churches, Missions, houses and fields had been laid waste! Bishop Grandin had to weep over the uncalled-for murder of two young missionaries.

Near the eastern boundary of Alberta and about twenty-five miles apart, lie Frog and Onion Lakes, upon whose shores two flourishing Missions had been established. The older Mission, that at Frog Lake, was under the directorship of a very capable Oblate of French-Canadian descent, the Rev. Father Fafard. In charge of the recently established Onion Lake Mission was Father Marchand who, two years before, had come from France.

Hearing of the pillaging and other crimes perpetrated by the pagan Indians, Father Marchand took his flock to Frog Lake as so isolated a spot as Onion Lake would likely be attacked. Together, on April 2nd, 1885, the two missionaries commenced the offices of Holy Thursday in a church crowded with Catholic Indians. All of a sudden there was a great commotion as terrified white colonists rushed in. Big Bear and his pagan Indians had attacked the village and had driven these people into the church. Then, hideous in their war-paint, the half-naked savages themselves entered. The sacred functions were not interrupted, but, as soon as they were finished, Big Bear ordered all in the church to march to his camp. Resistance was useless.

Separated from each other, the two missionaries walked in the front ranks encouraging the captives and saying prayers aloud. Just as the last house of the village was left behind, the Government Agent refused to go further. There was a shout from the Indians, a shot was fired and the Agent dropped to the ground. There was a second and a third and two more men fell mortally wounded. Father Fafard rushed to the assistance of one of these, a man by the name of Delaney, to administer the Last Sacraments. As he raised his hand to give absolution, a bullet struck him and he fell to the

ground. Seeing that the Priest was still alive, an Indian, standing over him, fired a shot and killed him. Father Marchand started to run to his confrere's aid but was instantly killed by a bullet which pierced his head. That Holy Thursday gave the church two more martyrs of priestly zeal and charity.

After visiting Onion Lake some time later, Bishop Grandin wrote: "I was unable to find even one who had really seen the massacre. I was told that in the camp there was an old Indian woman who had washed the faces of our two martyrs and I sent for her. 'When I reached the dead Priests,' she said, 'their bodies were already cold. Their faces and their hands were covered with blood, as was also the cross which each held in his hand. Father Marchand's head was pierced by a bullet. Besides the wound that went through Father Fafard's heart, there must have been another as the blood had run down his arm. I got some water and I washed their faces and hands and their crosses.' "

No one knows how long the Priests lay where they had fallen but we do know that two Half-breeds reverently carried the bodies to the church, robed them in priestly vestments and placed them in the basement.

Before the bodies could be buried, the Mission was again attacked and set on fire while the pagans, wearing the sacred vestments, danced. The Priests' bodies were half burned. Six weeks later the vanguard of Major General Strange's troops buried them in the cemetery.

During the insurrection, Bishop Grandin gave shelter to the fugitives, gathered and protected the orphans and nursed the sick and wounded. At Batoche, the scene of one of the battles, he found Father Moulin, who had been shot through the leg and who seemed greatly to have aged. He also found there the well-named Faithful Companions of Jesus.

"Since my return from Europe," wrote the Bishop, "I have lost eight missionaries, of whom only two have died in their beds. The others have been drowned, frozen to death, or murdered by the Indians."

To Madame Fafard he sent her heroic son's rosary. To the parents of both he wrote letters which were "a cry of grief and yet one of joy and thanksgiving."

Out of evil God draws good. In March, 1888, Archbishop Taché telegraphed to Bishop Grandin: "I have baptized Chief Poundmaker and twenty-eight other Indians." Father Lacombe wrote: "The blood of Fathers Fafard and Marchand has obtained the conversion of their murderers. The latter will soon be released from jail. It was, however, most fitting that they should be pardoned by God before they were pardoned by man."

In 1891 the precious remains of the two martyred Oblates were transferred from the Frog Lake cemetery to the basement of the church at Onion Lake under the personal direction of Bishop Grandin. On August 11th, 1926, they were moved to the Oblate cemetery in St. Albert.

Poor Bishop Grandin! As he looked around after the insurrection, he saw ruins everywhere. He had worked so hard and had suffered so much to recruit missionaries and to beg alms in France and Canada so as to build up his diocese. He had been fairly successful and he was deeply grateful, and now he had lost so many missionaries as well as so many churches, convents, and schools. Still the work must go on. More missionaries and more financial aid were needed. He decided that, despite his age and his infirmities, he would again beg for his Missions.

After a short visit to Ottawa (Oct., 1885), where he attended to some urgent business, he visited the southern part of his diocese. From the Mission at McLeod he wrote: "On the 22nd of November I left St. Albert to visit our southern Missions. I shall soon go to the United States and then to Paris and then to Rome. I will stop off at Ottawa to discuss certain matters with the Government, for the good of the Indians. It will mean a great deal of work and worry for me, but were



*Third and present Convent of Grey Nuns at St. Albert*



this work and worry a thousand times more painful than I anticipate, I would not hesitate a moment. After all, what does a little more labour or suffering amount to? I feel that my course is nearly run and that my day of reckoning is near at hand. Pray that it will not be too bitter!"

In Eastern Canada he preached every day, and often several times a day with the result that his strength and health failed him and he had to go to a hospital. A few days of rest made him feel better but it did not cure him. He, nevertheless, set out for the United States and preached and begged in New York, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Providence, and other American cities.

He reached Rome in the beginning of May, 1887, and there asked the Pope to excuse him for being unable to offer him anything except the hide of a mountain goat. With a smile Leo XIII accepted the gift and wrapped it around his feet. "How kind to me the Holy Father was," wrote the Bishop, "the more I told him about our martyrs, the more he wanted to hear."

In France he spent most of his time seeing his benefactors and begging for his Missions. He then visited his family and Bishop Sébaux and took part in the Oblate General Chapter. After that he returned immediately to St. Albert.

Without stopping to rest, he made a partial visitation of his diocese, giving consolation and encouragement to all who had suffered during the recent uprising. His diary, at this time, was greatly neglected but he made up for this by writing letter after letter to friends and benefactors, begging for the financial assistance which his diocese so sorely needed.

At about this time he was relieved of part of the burden which sat so heavily upon him. On the 16th of July, 1889, Archbishop Taché opened the first Council of St. Boniface. Besides Archbishop Taché, there were present Bishops Grandin, Durién (of British Columbia),

Faraud and Clut, all Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

At this meeting, alleging his infirmities, the immensity of his diocese and the impossibility for him to cope with the situation, Bishop Grandin succeeded in having the Council request Rome to divide his diocese. This request was granted, and Father Pascal, O.M.I., a missionary in the Mackenzie, was, in consequence, made Vicar Apostolic of the Eastern half of the diocese, with his See at Prince Albert. The diocese of St. Albert, in spite of this division, still covered an area larger than France. It had twenty-one posts, twenty-four Priests, nineteen Lay Brothers, and two Communities of Sisters who had schools at St. Albert, Lake LaBiche, Calgary, and soon afterwards, at Edmonton and Lethbridge.

Before closing the chapter, we shall mention a favour granted to Bishop Grandin, a favour for which he had long and ardently prayed. This is how he describes it: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy Servant, O Lord, according to Thy word in peace. Today, March 17, 1880, I have had the privilege of ordaining to the Priesthood a native son of this country, a privilege for which I have daily prayed ever since I was made Bishop. After many disheartening failures, we have at length succeeded! The fervour and other good qualities shown by our dear Father Cunningham make me certain that I shall never have to regret that I made a Priest of him."

A few years later, the Bishop's joy was renewed when he ordained another native son and Half-breed, the zealous and capable Father Patrick Beaudry.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

AND HE THAT GIVES THIS WARNING SAYS, INDEED I AM COMING SOON. BE IT SO, THEN; COME, LORD JESUS!

—Apoc. XXII, 20

As the years rolled on and in spite of the partition of his diocese, the venerable Bishop's troubles and worries increased.

The Federal Government remained anti-Catholic or at least unfavourable to Catholics. Catholic schools were opposed and combated. The most solemn promises were broken and the outstanding services rendered to the cause of colonization by the missionaries were forgotten. Those who brought in the colonists seemed to endeavour to bring in as few Catholics and as many Protestants, Jews, Schismatics and Mennonites as possible. Protestant missionary and Biblical Societies poured Ministers and money into the country and built their churches, schools, orphanages and hospitals. Catholic countries, it is true, sent out emigrants, but they were not numerous and they, like the Bishop, had not the financial resources of the members of other religious denominations.

To increase the number of Catholics, the Bishop tried to induce French Canadians to migrate to the West. He sent Father Lacombe and the Abbé Morin to Quebec for this purpose and, as a result, several French-Canadian parishes were established.

Only one paragraph in a report, published in 1892, mentions persecution, but several paragraphs are worth quoting: "The Cathedral, built in 1870, is too small and the roof is in danger of falling in. We shall have to build again.

"The young city of Edmonton, situated about nine miles from St. Albert, is now the terminus of the railway coming north from Calgary. Edmonton will be the Capital when Alberta becomes a Province.

"In many villages the Indians have to suffer for their faith and many of them, seeing that they will receive no favours from the Government, unless they become Protestants, are weak enough to become apostates, at least outwardly, and to send their children to Protestant schools, the only ones, by the way, recognized by the Government.

"The Faithful Companions of Jesus are excellent religious and splendid teachers. Their school at Leth-

bridge very favourably compares with the nearby Public school. The population of this town, about two thousand souls, is in great part made up of Belgians, most of whom are miners. They have built a beautiful stone church but, unfortunately, it is too small. In spite of their poverty, these good people intend to enlarge and embellish their church and to build a rectory for Father Van Tighem, their beloved Pastor."

If Father Van Tighem and the other missionaries were as devoted as they were, this was in no small measure due to the zeal with which Bishop Grandin burned for their sanctification. How many retreats he preached to them, how many letters he wrote to them, what fatherly advice he gave them in his successful efforts to make them worthy of their calling! Although he himself was over-burdened with grief and worry, he endeavoured to hide this and to encourage his missionaries. To one of them who showed discouragement, he wrote: "In spite of His miracles, His boundless charity, and His infinite perfection, Our dear Lord converted very few people. What consolation did he have in His ministry? Now, my dear Father, you must not be more hard to please than He. Pray hard, beg God to convert your people, put up with the rebuffs and with the ingratitude! If you do this, you may not convert your people but you certainly will please God. And, after all, that is all we have to do, isn't it?" "Suffering", he wrote on another occasion, "is the ladder by which we shall rise to God."

Ever a model of charity, he himself personally nursed his dying Priests with all the tenderness of a mother and prepared them for their end.

He was as humble as he was charitable. Fearing that he was unequal to his task, he wished to resign as Bishop. "The very thought that my unfitness may be impeding God's designs really tortures me," he wrote to his Superior General. The latter replied: "We fully appreciate the sincerity of your intentions, the wisdom of your actions, your unswerving devotedness and the

delicacy of your conscience both as a Bishop and as a Religious. We know and attest furthermore that, as a theologian, you have made a profound impression upon Princes of the Church as well as upon the leading men of letters."

To his many sorrows there was now added another; he learned of the death of his intimate friend and benefactor, Mgr. Sébaux. As soon as he heard of this, he fell to his knees and a flood of tears burst from his eyes. Many another bitter sorrow was in store for him.

In May, 1892, a young missionary, Father Dupé, spent ten days at Edmonton and St. Albert. To his relatives he wrote: "Bishop Grandin appears to be suffering intensely. How kind he is! In his presence one forgets that he is a Bishop and sees only a father in him. He is expecting the visit of several Bishops whom Father Lacombe is taking to attend an Indian Catholic Festival in British Columbia and to see what wonderful progress the Church has made in that distant land."

These Archbishops and Bishops, their Lordships Taché, LaFlèche, Duhamel, MacDonald, Blondel, Lorrain, and Grouard arrived at St. Albert and were cordially greeted and entertained by Bishop Grandin. In connection with this visit, Father Jonquet says: "In honour of the visiting Prelates, bed sheets appeared for the first time in this poor Bishop's residence at St. Albert. The occasional use of sugar at table dated also from that visit."

About two years before the visit of the Bishops just recorded, Bishop Grandin began to feel the first symptoms of the complaint which was to bring him to the grave. As the pains were most severe during his long trips to the various Missions of his diocese, he attributed them to the jolting of the wagons and the carriages in which he rode. Long and painful treatments gave him no relief and it was finally found that he was suffering from calculus.



*Bishops at the Consecration of Bishop Breynat, O.M.I., April 6th, 1902, at St. Albert*

*Upper row: Bishops Legat. Pascal, Clai, Dontenwill, Breynat*

*Seated: Bishops Grandin, Langevin, Grouard*

In his diary, he wrote: "I do not try to deceive myself; this new malady will end only in the grave. My one hope is that my illness will not be long because I do not wish to be a burden to the diocese. What worries me most is my being responsible for this diocese at a time when great activity is required and here I am unable to do much."

On the anniversary of his birthday and Baptism he wrote: "Three and sixty years! How long will it be God's pleasure to keep me on this earth? I am His in life and death. If I may judge from appearances, my death is near at hand. I had not expected to live so long. Oh, that I had made better use of all these years! To atone for my faults I willingly accept, in submission to God's Holy Will, whatever kind of death it may please Him to send me. The only favour I beg of Him is that I die in His love and that He give me a successor who will repair my mistakes and will do the good that I have left undone." The Bishop's suffering increased and became unbearable. In spite of them, he heroically remained at his post of duty. His nephew, a physician in Paris, urged him to undergo an operation. The Very Rev. Father Soullier, assistant to the Superior General, wrote to him: "This sort of operation is a common thing here and it is nearly always successful even in the case of men seventy and eighty years of age. I would like you to come here to Paris for treatment or for an operation. Were you to leave St. Albert in January, you would likely have recovered by March and you could then take part in the General Chapter."

The Bishop still hesitated, but when he learned of the Superior General's death, he decided to go to France to undergo the operation and to take part in the General Chapter at which a new Superior General would be elected. Accompanied by his nephew, Father H. Grandin, he left St. Albert on the 19th of January, 1893.

A celebrated specialist found several calculi and an operation was deemed urgently needed. On February

23, Bishop Grandin wrote from his room in the hospital: "My room has become a surgery and is filled with many bottles and surgical instruments at which I hardly dare look. I do not expect to sleep much tonight. I place myself in God's hands. Whether I die under the knife tomorrow or whether I die later on, I leave it entirely to Him. The only thing I ask is that He be merciful to me."

Under the anaesthetic, his lips moved in prayer. "At about ten o'clock," he writes, "I found myself in bed, suffering intensely and surrounded by the charitable Brothers of this hospital. They tell me the operation has been successful."

The success was only relative as only some of the calculi had been pulverized. The operation, however, gave him great relief and enabled him to work for several years.

All those who saw him in the hospital before, during, and for a month after the operation, were greatly edified. When he offered the surgeon his fee, the latter replied: "I shall be more than paid if you will kindly pray for me and for my family." The Brothers in charge of the hospital said: "One could not approach this saintly Bishop without becoming better."

Bishop Grandin spent the time of his convalescence with his brother who was now Canon Grandin of Laval. "My brother, with whom I am staying," wrote the Bishop, "is as interested in our Missions as I am myself. I cannot tell you of all that he has done and is doing for us. May God reward him!"

Bishop Grandin took part in the General Chapter which elected the Very Rev. Father Soullier Superior General, travelled over most of France and Belgium in the interests of his diocese, preached and begged wherever he went, conferred Holy Orders in various places, assisted in the consecration of his fellow Oblate, Bishop Joulain, who had been appointed to the See of Jaffna, visited Alsace-Lorraine, the Rhineland, Bavaria,



and Rome. God blessed his efforts and, in due time, from the countries which he had visited, came zealous missionaries who spoke the languages of many of the new-comers to his diocese.

Wherever he went, he made a lasting impression. A Catholic Review says: "During November Bishop Grandin visited many cities in Belgium in order to acquaint Catholics with the works and needs of his diocese. His venerable appearance, the kindness which shone from his face, his burning words made a deep impression."

In Belgium, as elsewhere, old men of today still speak with veneration of Bishop Grandin's sermons and conferences on his Missions. The impression he made in Seminaries was as great. The Superior of one of these Seminaries said to the students: "Today you will have the pleasure of meeting and hearing a living Saint." Many of these Seminarians became Oblates and followed Bishop Grandin to his Missions.

But it was time to leave France. His farewell to his brother, Canon Grandin, and to his sister Mélanie, was most touching. Of fourteen children they alone remained and they felt that they should never meet on this earth again.

Father Jonquet says: "The venerable Canon accompanied his brother to the boat. In the Bishop's cabin, both wept. As the boat moved out to sea, bending as if the better to see his brother, the Canon kept waving his hand in farewell. The two were never to meet again in this life."

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE TIME HAS NEARLY COME WHEN I CAN GO FREE

—II Tim. IV. 6

In spite of his age and of his infirmities, Bishop Grandin knew no rest. After stopping off at Ottawa to ordain some Oblate students and to visit Archbishop Duhamel, he hastened to St. Boniface, where he found

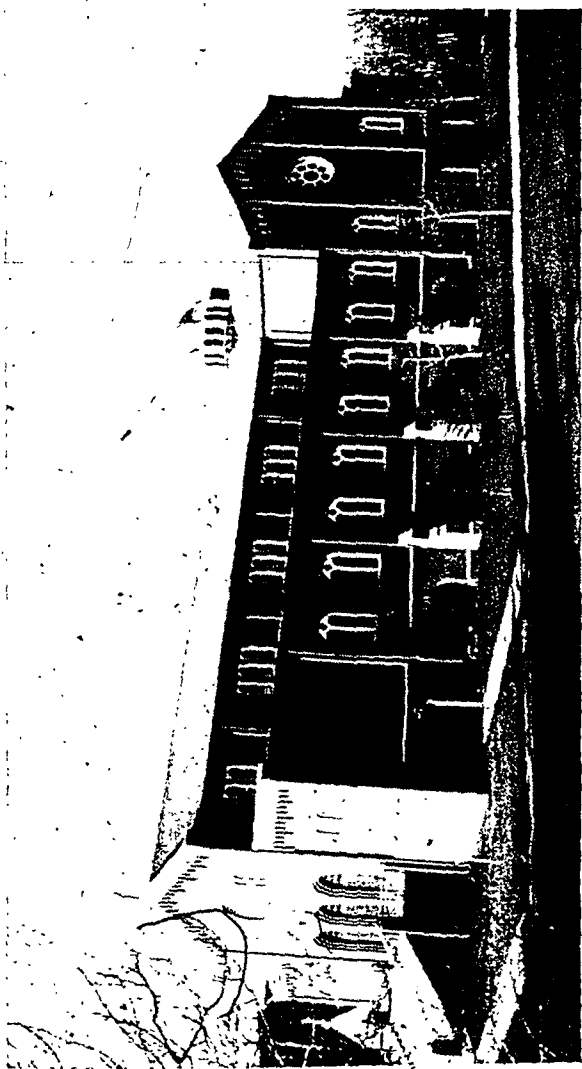
his intimate friend and adviser, Mgr Taché, gravely ill, and arrived at St. Albert towards the end of April, 1894. Six weeks later he was suddenly called back to St. Boniface where, his eyes dim with tears, he gave the Last Sacraments to Archbishop Taché. Early in the morning of June 22nd, having kissed his friend's hand, he said: "My Lord, I will again give you absolution. And then I will again offer up the Holy Sacrifice for you." While Bishop Grandin was saying Mass, the Archbishop, with Father Langevin and Brother Boisramé kneeling beside him, died.

A concerted effort was made to have Bishop Grandin succeed the friend and father whom he mourned. "I am too old and too ill to think of accepting such a post," he wrote. "I myself need a Coadjutor." He had, however, to write many a letter to Rome, Quebec, and Paris, to escape the Archbishopric of St. Boniface.

Some weeks later, with great joy and respect, he welcomed his new Superior General to St. Albert and begged him for Priests who could speak the languages of his Italian, Flemish, German, Polish, and Slav people.

After the departure of the Superior General, he visited the southern part of his diocese and there had the pleasure of consecrating the stone church at Lethbridge. He rejoiced at the progress made at other posts and also at the news that the very capable Father Langevin, O.M.I., had been named Archbishop of St. Boniface.

Although Bishop Grandin kept unremittingly at work, he was continually suffering. Neuralgia, rheumatism, pains in the stomach, and in all his muscles were added to the calculus. The last named became so painful that he had to undergo a second operation in Montreal. "For many years now", he wrote in his diary, "God has given me countless warnings to prepare for death . . . May His dear Mother plead for me and obtain mercy. Death has already begun its work on me. O my God, I accept death as a richly deserved



*Third Cathedral and Present Church at St. Albert*

punishment for all my misdeeds. Send death in whatever form You wish, and in whatever place it pleases You. In case that pain or weakness makes me cry out or even murmur, I now say, 'Father, Thy will be done.' "

On May 13, 1897, Bishop Grandin was officially informed that he had been given a Coadjutor in the person of Father Legal, O.M.I., a Priest as distinguished for his administrative abilities as for his learning and piety, whom Bishop Grandin, Archbishop Langevin, and the other Bishops had recommended to the Holy See.

In the letter in which he communicated this news to his Priests, Bishop Grandin said: "We doubt whether Bishop Legal will be able to love you more than we, but we can assure you that he will love you just as much. And you, to whom we write, perhaps for the last time, you will love him as you have loved us, for he is the one chosen by God. He is our brother and, as we hope to have the privilege of imposing our hands on him, our son."

For the preceding sixteen years, Father Legal had done his utmost to convert the war-like Blackfoot tribe, but without apparent success. As missionaries were so sorely needed in other parts of the diocese, Bishop Grandin on more than one occasion had decided to take Father Legal from these Indians and to place him among others who would not rebel against grace. Father Legal replied: "I would prefer to remain here in spite of the unfruitfulness of my efforts. It will take years, perhaps generations, to civilize and convert this tribe. Some missionaries must remain here without consolation during that time and I have no objection to being one of them."

He was school teacher, architect, cook, physician and even grave-digger on the Blackfoot Reserve. These Indians were so afraid of death that they left their dead where they died and they would not say the "Hail Mary" to the end because of the words "and at the

hour of our death." The news of his elevation to the episcopacy came just as Father Legal had finished making a coffin for and burying an Indian child.

In 1886 he had only barely escaped being named Coadjutor to and successor of Mgr. Taché and, on another occasion, Vicar Apostolic of Saskatchewan. If he had escaped these burdens, it was through the influence and pleadings of Bishop Grandin who wanted him to fill the position to which he was now called.

After the consecration of his Coadjutor, Bishop Grandin ended his address with these words: "Greater labours and sufferings for the Faith of Christ await thee." He added that, as Simon of Cyrene had been given Jesus to help Him bear His cross, so Bishop Legal had been given to him for the same purpose. The Oblate General Administration then made the newly consecrated Bishop religious Superior of the Oblates in the diocese of St. Albert.

During the five years which Bishop Grandin still had to live, he helped and guided his Coadjutor, set a perfect example of religious regularity and prepared for death.

In 1897 he was deeply shocked by the untimely death of the recently elected Superior General. Two years later he insisted on having a magnificent celebration to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Father Lacombe's ordination to the Priesthood. In his address, upon this occasion, after having praised the priestly virtues, the heroism and the devotedness of the celebrated Father Lacombe, Bishop Grandin pointed out that had the venerable jubilarian been a Bishop (and it had often been felt that he should have been) he would have been so tied down that he could not have accomplished all the valuable work he had done for Church and Country.

It was in the same year, 1889, that he wrote to his brother, Canon Grandin: "During the last year or so, our good Brother Leriche has not been able to work

much. He has had to leave his forge and has been able to do only a little work in his room. Recently he began to suffer severely and, one night, between twelve and one, he came to see me. 'Pardon me, My Lord', he said, 'I cannot sleep. No matter what position I take in bed, the agony is unbearable. I am going to die soon, please hear my confession!' I told him to wait until I had dressed. 'Don't trouble yourself to get up, My Lord,' he replied. He knelt by my bed and began his confession. Three days later, just after receiving Holy Communion, he died at his place in the chapel."

The Brother did not fear to disturb the Bishop at so late an hour. Why? Not only because he knew of the latter's kindness and great charity, but because he knew that the Bishop's own sufferings caused him sleepless nights.

On the 21st of January, 1900, it was with great joy that he assisted while Bishop Legal blessed the St. Albert Minor Seminary and with equal joy that he himself said the first Mass, on the morrow, in this institution for the establishment of which he had worked so hard and had prayed so much. The Chronicler of St. Albert noted that, although there were only seven students, between them they spoke six different languages. With this, Bishop Grandin was greatly pleased, as he wished to give the Catholic immigrants missionaries who spoke their languages.

Towards the end of the same year the venerable Bishop was overjoyed to receive the visit of Mgr. Falconio, Apostolic Delegate to Canada, and to take part in the ceremony at which the Delegate blessed the first stone of the new Cathedral.

A short time after this came the news of Canon Grandin's death. From the moment that he had asked his brother Vital to remain in France so that he himself might go to the Canadian North-West Missions, this admirable Priest had worked night and day for these Missions. A man of boundless charity, a Priest accord-

ing to the Heart of Christ, Canon Grandin had lived in extreme poverty so as to send to his missionary brother every cent that he could spare or beg. And how many young men he had directed to the Oblate Novitiate and eventually to the diocese of St. Albert! His heart deeply wounded by the blow, all that Bishop Grandin could write was; "Poor, dear brother! And so, after all, he has died before me!" In conversation he added: "This is another warning from God to prepare myself for death."

## CHAPTER TWENTY

HE MEANTIME WAS PRAYING: LORD JESUS, HE SAID, RECEIVE MY SPIRIT!

—Acts VII, 58

Bishop Grandin's life, so full of work and suffering, of charity and zeal, of meekness and humility, was drawing to a close. As we think of it, how applicable to him are the words of the great Apostle: "In many labours, in deaths often . . . thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I was in the depth of the sea. In journeys often; in perils of water; in perils of robbers; in perils from the Gentiles; in perils in the city; in perils in the wilderness; in perils in the sea; in perils from false brethren; in labour and painfulness; in much watchings; in hunger and thirst; in fastings, often; in cold and nakedness. Besides those things, . . . my daily instance, my solicitude for all the churches!"

Before we speak of his last days, let us rapidly glance at some of his heroic virtues. Charity was, perhaps, his characteristic virtue. By his kindness, his goodness of heart, all who met him were drawn to him and felt impelled to give him their full confidence and affection. As the old Lay Brother used to say: "It was good to live with Bishop Grandin!" It is true that "he was human and, at times, a little hasty of temper, par-



*Bishop Gröndin in his later years*



ticularly when it was a question of the glory of God, the interests of the Church, or of the Oblate Congregation, or the honour of the Priesthood, or of the interests of souls. But how prompt he was to make up for any momentary and instinctive lack of patience by a visit, a letter, an apology, or an act of kindness!"

Extracts from two of his letters will suggest how supernatural he was: "My dear friend," he wrote to one of his Priests, "the one thing you must dread is mediocrity because it deprives us of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. We are poor, worthless, puny; let us at least be generous, magnanimous, that is, men with large, noble souls. We are few; our virtues must supply for numbers. Let us always say 'Yes' to God's inspirations, and 'no' to our human inclinations."

To an aged Priest he wrote: "In the trials which have befallen you, see the merciful hand of God. Before calling you to His tribunal, He wishes to make you more like His Divine Son, the Man of Sorrows. Neither you nor I have long to live. Let us ask God to pardon us for not always having seen that it was His loving hand which laid all our crosses upon us."

His prudence was shown by the fact that, before taking any important decision, he, who had given every spare moment to study, he who was so gifted with great common sense, always sought counsel. His prudence is shown in the advice he gave to an over-impetuous missionary: "You must take more care of yourself. It seems to me that a person can be zealous without killing himself. Since God chooses to make use of us, it is our duty not to impair our health or to ruin it. A poor man, who earns his daily bread with one horse, might, for a time, make more money by working the horse day and night, but the horse would soon die and the man would lose more than he had gained. We must take care of our bodies because we need them in order to work for God."

Although, when he became Bishop, he was no longer

obliged to obey all the rules of the Oblate Congregation, nevertheless he almost scrupulously observed them. Every year, on the first of January, the anniversary of his religious profession, he renewed his vows in writing and humbly sent the document to the Superior General.

Five months before his death, he wrote: "Today, January 1st, 1902, is the 49th anniversary of one of the most solemn acts of my life, an act which I have never regretted, my religious profession. Today, as I have done every year, I have with great joy renewed my vows on my bended knees and, in spirit, placing myself at the Father General's feet."

His complete submission to the will of God is shown in the prayer he used to say: "My God, my lot is in your hands, and, were it not, I would place it there." And also in the words he repeated in his trials and afflictions: "God willed this, therefore it is good."

Examples of his humility may be found on almost every page of his diary. For instance, on the 3rd of October, 1901, he wrote: "For fifty years I have daily made my morning meditation and I fear that I have not made it satisfactorily once. How many distractions at times! I hope to make up for this in heaven."

Father Jonquet writes: "The Blessed Sacrament was the centre of his devotion. Early every morning, when the Community came to the Chapel for meditation, they found him kneeling before the altar. Every evening he prolonged his visit to the Blessed Sacrament far into the night. Before other members of the community rose, he had already gone around the Stations of the Cross. When, in the last days he had not the strength to rise after kneeling, he used to drag himself on his knees from station to station."

The day of his dissolution was not far off and, with ever increasing care and fervour, he prepared himself to meet his Creator. On September 13th, 1901, he wrote: "Long ago, death began its work in me and soon this work will have been completed. Into Thy Hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."

After January 21st, 1902, he was unable to say Mass. This was a great sacrifice for him. He wrote: "Yes, Lord. I have deserved to suffer a great deal. I offer you my sufferings for the souls confided to my care." He was unable to sleep, but he profited by this in order to say more prayers, to say the Rosary over and over again and to meditate on the sufferings and death of Jesus.

A severe crisis made him ask for the Last Sacraments on February 4th. Father Leduc thus described the ceremony: "Yesterday I had the painful consolation of administering Viaticum and Extreme Unction to our venerable, dearly beloved and very holy Mgr. Grandin. With what faith and love he received these precious gifts! With what piety he made the profession of faith and renewed his vows as an Oblate of Mary Immaculate! How humbly he begged pardon of us all for whatever he might have done to cause us pain. With what love he blessed us and offered his life for his Clergy, his diocese and the conversion of sinners! He is very ill but we have not yet given up hope for his recovery."

He had still four months to suffer. During this time he was able to hear Mass daily and, except on two occasions, to receive Holy Communion. He regained enough strength to sit up in a chair and to try to recite the Divine Office.

"Although he is unable to administer the affairs of the diocese," wrote his Coadjutor, "he is interested in everything and thinks of everything concerning the diocese." During a great part of the time he was ill, a Priest used to sit up with him until midnight and then awaken another Priest who would say an early Mass in Mgr. Grandin's room, so that the latter could receive Holy Communion. His nephew, Father Henri Grandin, generally had the privilege of saying this early Mass. Later on, His Lordship, feeling somewhat better, had Mass said at 5.30 and remained fasting so as to receive Holy Communion.

Mgr. Langevin, Archbishop of St. Boniface, paid him a visit and remained several days with him. Mgr. Breynat, who had recently been named Vicar Apostolic of Mackenzie, prepared himself for his consecration at St. Albert and was consecrated there. All the Bishops of the ecclesiastical Province of St. Boniface came to the consecration and also to see their dying friend.

Immediately after his episcopal consecration, which took place on April 6th, Bishop Breynat went to Bishop Grandin who, on account of his intense suffering, had not been able to be present at the ceremony, and knelt for his blessing. Then, despite his sufferings and in order to please those who requested it, the dying Bishop, helped by others, dragged himself to the place where the visiting Bishops (Langevin, Grouard, Clut, Pascal, Dontenwill and Breynat) and Mgr. Legal were going to have their picture taken. In this picture, the last taken of him, Bishop Grandin could not hide the agony he was suffering. "Lord," his biographer exclaims, "how sad it is to see thus broken one of Thy Apostles!"

"In spite of all these consolations," wrote Bishop Legal, "our dear Bishop continued to suffer pain that was at times unbearable. His illness was the consequence and the continuation of his former infirmity which had never been cured. His stomach was the part most affected and, to the last, the pain was acute. He suffered with patience and resignation and never complained, even when he could not help groaning with pain.

"During the last two months, his sufferings became more intense and he failed rapidly. On the 2nd of June he asked for the Last Sacraments and it was my sad privilege to give to him, whom we all loved, Holy Viaticum, Extreme Unction, and the Plenary Indulgence for the dying. Bishop Clut, the Fathers and Brothers, Sister Grandin, his niece, and the other Sisters as well as our employees were present.

"He spoke to us for about ten minutes and then

his strength failed him. He begged pardon of any whom he might have offended: he thanked all his Priests, Brothers, Sisters, the Oblate Congregation and all his benefactors for what they had done for him and for the diocese. He asked us to carry on his work and then he blessed us.

"He renewed his vows before receiving Holy Viaticum and affectionately embraced his brothers in religion. During the day, he received all who wished to speak to him. A telegram was sent to his nephew, Father Grandin, but on account of the condition of the roads, it was felt that the latter could not arrive in time. 'That', said the Bishop, 'is another sacrifice which he and I will offer to God.'

"We wished to sit up in turns during the night with him but he felt that this was unnecessary, and, so, Brother Landais, who had nursed him during his illness, alone spent the night with him. About three o'clock in the morning, he lost consciousness and Brother Landais called me. Bishop Grandin soon regained consciousness but was in such pain that his groans could be heard throughout the house. There was no need to suggest ejaculatory prayers to him; he prayed constantly and kept repeating: 'Jesus, Mary, Joseph', and calling on his guardian Angel to help him.

"A little before 5 o'clock, his last agony began. I kept repeating 'Jesus, Mary, Joseph' to him, helped him to make the Sign of the Cross frequently and held to his lips his Oblate Cross which he affectionately kissed. By this time the Community was at his bedside and his confessor, Father Mérier, gave him a last absolution.

"I began the prayers for the dying and, just before I had finished them, Bishop Grandin ceased breathing. His beautiful soul had gone to God and, at length, his journey over, he found rest.

"We recited the 'De Profundis' and a few prayers, and then I and all the Priests said Mass for him. Our

one consolation is that, in heaven we have a friend and a father who prays for us."

The news of his death spread quickly and everyone said: "The saintly Bishop is dead." During the five days which preceded his funeral, many wept but many more came, as many had come after Bishop De Mazenod's death, to have their crosses, medals and other objects of piety touch his remains. In death, as in life, his face wore an expression of serene peace and kindness.

These words from his last Will and Testament are well worth recording: "Should I die while visiting my diocese but not at an Oblate Mission, I desire that, to continue preaching the mystery of the Redemption, a large wooden cross be erected where I die. Should I be drowned, I wish that a cross be erected where the accident occurred or where my body is found. I wish to be robed in old vestments and to be buried in a plain coffin made by one of our Brothers. The only favour I ask of God is that I die in His Love and that He judge me with great mercy."

## CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT!

—Matt. XXV, 21

During his lifetime Bishop Grandin was regarded as a Saint by all who came into contact with him. Soon after his death, his reputation for sanctity spread quickly and created such confidence in the efficacy of his intercession that many prayed to him and, if we may believe them, received miraculous favours. So far, however, the Church has not given an official decision in this matter.

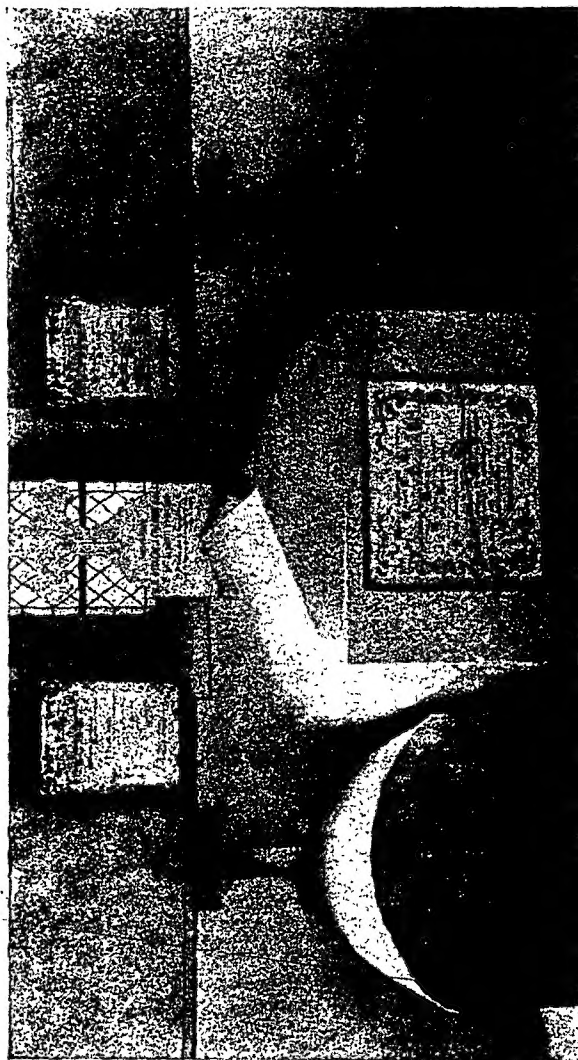
His life, as edifying as it is interesting, has been written in French by the Rev. Father Jonquet, O.M.I. Those who have read it are unanimous in declaring that

"one day the Church will take up the question of the Beatification and Canonization of this zealous Apostle!" These words remind us of the admiration of Bishop De Mazenod for Bishop Grandin's holiness and of the words of the Belgian priest: "Gentlemen, the Bishop who is about to address you is a Saint."

A pamphlet written by Brother Memoriam, F.S.C., Rector of St. Joseph's University College, and published in Edmonton in 1936, says without reserve: "Bishop Grandin's reputation for holiness has been of long standing. His life through, unknown to him, he had been pointed to as possessing piety to a rare degree. His mother had noticed that he far surpassed his brothers and sisters in that respect. His fellow students later revered him for his manly piety. As for the saintly Founder of the great Missionary Society, whose pride the young Grandin would become one day, he both admired and loved him, and thanked God that he had the privilege of conferring on him the sublime dignity of the episcopate. Bishop Grandin's subordinates looked upon him as a living Saint. The Lay Brother, who had cared for him during his last illness, once said: 'It was my great privilege and one of the greatest joys of my life, to have known a Saint at such close proximity.' The Indians, with characteristic simplicity, thought that the saintly Oblate could read the inmost secrets of their hearts. Perhaps he could. 'O great Father,' a Montagnais said to him one day, 'surely the Great Spirit must be all kindness and goodness since, to come to us, He deigned to come under the form of one as good as you'."

To those privileged to be near him during the last months of his life, it appeared certain that this venerable Prelate knew before hand the exact day, hour, and moment of his death. God, it would seem, had revealed it to him.

The Church alone can infallibly decide whether or not he was a Saint. On February 24th, 1937, the Church took up this question after the investigations had been



*Tombs of Bishop Grundin (centre), Father Lacombe (left), Father Leduc (right)*



completed in the archdioceses, or dioceses of Edmonton (formerly St. Albert), Paris, Winnipeg, Calgary, Prince Albert, Le Mans and the Vicariate of the MacKenzie. The introductory decree of the cause says that: "For thirty years he ruled his diocese in an exemplary fashion, reproducing a faithful image of the Divine Shepherd." Among those who begged the Sovereign Pontiff to sign this decree were eight Cardinals, thirteen Archbishops, thirty-two Bishops, Directors of the Universities of Lyons and Toulouse, the Superiors General of many Orders and Congregations, etc.

From its first resting place, in front of the sanctuary of the second St. Albert Cathedral, the body of the Servant of God was transferred to the crypt of the third Cathedral on March 19th, 1906. "After four years in a grave into which water had filtered," writes Father Leduc, "the precious remains of Bishop Grandin seem scarcely to have been touched by the hand of death. There was no disagreeable odour and the features were easily discernible. The lower part of the face was unchanged but the nose and the forehead were bloated and of a pinkish colour, as if, just as in a living person, blood were flowing there. The eyes were sunken. The pontifical vestments were as fresh as on the day of burial except for the white mitre which had taken on a darker hue. The coffin was left open for more than a day and then, on March 21st, after a solemn Requiem Mass, sung by Bishop Legal, it was placed in the new tomb and sealed in the presence of witnesses."

"May this tomb be opened again," says Father Leduc, "on the day when one of the successors of St. Peter glorifies the first Bishop of St. Albert, whom the faithful continue to call the good, kind, humble, saintly Bishop Grandin."

Bishop Grandin is still held in profound veneration. In September, 1937, Father Naessens, O.M.I., Superior at St. Albert, wrote: "During the greater part of the year, many pilgrims from Eastern and Western Canada,

and also from the United States, come to pray at the tomb of Bishop Grandin."

The countless favours attributed to the intercession of this Servant of God should induce us to pray to him in all our needs. Let us ask Almighty God that new wondrous cures and favours be granted in answer to prayers addressed to Bishop Grandin, so that, in God's own time, this humble and zealous apostle may be raised by the Church to the ranks of the Blessed in Heaven.

